CHECHAHCO and SOURDOUGH

A STORY of ALASKA

By
Dealt E. Doney

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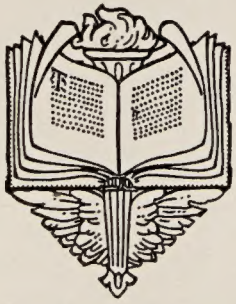
CHECHAHCO
and
SOURDOUGH

A Story of Alaska



By SCOTT C. BONE

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To
MARGUERITE
and
SHIRLEY ANNE
Chechahcos

335249

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"She ran up the gangplank, disappeared for a moment and reappeared at the rail on the upper deck." [p. 24]

FOREWORD

THE ensuing pages are intended to depict phases of life in Alaska, *real* Alaska, which, after over half a century of ownership by the United States, still figures in fancy rather than fact.

If the little narrative may contribute toward enlightenment regarding the alluring, unknown Northland by acquainting the reader with a sturdy people engaged in working out their destiny in this last of American frontiers, it will have served its purpose.

CHAPTER I.

CAPITAL OF WONDERLAND

JUNEAU, the picturesque little capital, which you will find on the map of the world, if you look diligently, was all animation when the steamship City of Seattle, bearing the new Governor and his wife and daughter, entered Gastineau Channel and approached the harbor.

Flags and banners were in evidence and the dock was crowded.

Tourists aboard the vessel sought places of vantage on the upper and lower decks that they might witness the scenes of greeting and perhaps be included in the pictures perpetuating the event.

A government boat, its colors flying, carrying an official committee, with a band playing a lively air, met the steamship and salutes were exchanged.

Standing on the bridge, the Governor and family, he continually lifting his hat and they smiling and waving handkerchiefs, found opportunity in the interim of landing to glimpse and study their official home to be.

Surrounded by mountains, the channel seemingly a broad river rather than an inland sea, Juneau was pleasing to the eye. In the foreground stood out conspicuously the largest business building in the Territory, a concrete structure, surmounted on elevated sites by the Federal Court-house on the left and the High School on the right.

Mts. Juneau, Roberts and Jumbo, partially covered with snow, although the warm July sun shone brightly, loomed large and formidable.

Two great mining plants on the mountain side ad-

jacent to the capital bespoke the industrial importance of the community and enhanced its picturesqueness.

Across the channel Douglas-Treadwell, once centers of colossal mining operations, but now inactive and going backward, owing to a disastrous cave-in that halted enterprise and entailed enormous loss, spread invitingly along the shore, silent and deserted while the citizenry joined the large contingent across the water in the greeting and celebration of the day.

Fishing craft and bureau boats lined the harbor and whistles blew as the City of Seattle drew closer to the dock.

Motion picture experts and photographers innumerable, amateur and professional, busied themselves taking views and snapshots, with cameras focused upon the official party.

The new Governor, his thoughts running fast, was deeply impressed. A champion of the Northland, he felt that he would love this capital. He had accepted his mission seriously. Optimistic by nature, he was strong of faith and courage and dreaming fine dreams of the future. His heart warmed and his pulse quickened in appreciation of this welcome extended him and affection for these people crowded on the dock. Craving their friendship, he was prepared to give in fullest measure his sincerest friendship and helpfulness in return. The transformation in his life—the coming from the greatest metropolis of the Union to this miniature capital, the change of sphere from large to small—involved no loss or regret in his philosophy. He would be happy in his work. The post had come unsought, and he hailed its opportunities. Too long this great domain had been neglected, misunderstood and forgotten. He was conscious that enduring credit would come only

through duty performed and ends accomplished. Otherwise, thus out of the busy world that had known him, the position of trust would not be worth while. Its emoluments were uninviting. The role of a perfunctory executive possessed no charm for him. He could not afford to mark time. His years were too precious. Therefore, he must make good. The dwindling population of this rich and resourceful country must be checked. For fifty years it had valiantly struggled and courageously encountered and overcome natural obstacles, but still it was an unknown land. Administration at long range and complicated red-tap methods and an inefficient and impossible bureaucratic system had combined to retard growth and maim, if not kill, the pioneer spirit and curb individual initiative which every country, new or old, must have, if it would thrive.

The world war out of the way and pressing international and domestic problems in course of adjustment, the new regime at Washington was committed to a policy of development of this wonderland. No longer should it exist in solitary and melancholy aloofness, its needs ignored and its appeals unheard or unheeded. A brighter and better era was surely dawning.

These reflections inspired his hope and stimulated his faith as the steamer fastened to the dock and the gang-plank was put out.

Juneau! Already he loved this capital and felt he should love it more. He would endeavor to bring Washington and Juneau closer together and effect a more intimate and helpful relationship. Juneau was entitled to and should receive at his hands all possible aid in becoming a more important capital.

Kindred feelings filled the hearts of the Governor's wife and daughter as they, too, surveyed the

beautiful environment and acknowledged the greetings of the enthusiastic throng.

A colorful banner, resplendent in effect, emblem of a great order into which the Governor had been inducted on his journey across the Continent, was held aloft and conveyed a warm fraternal welcome.

Descending from the bridge, momentary interruptions occurred to permit fellow-travelers to take leave of the official party. Cameras clicked on all sides in the hurried taking of parting snapshots.

"Do not forget me," eagerly urged a young school teacher, Lyle Blake, of whom they had become fond. "I shall be at the Zynda for a few days and then on into the interior."

"We shall never forget you," the Governor's wife assured her. "Come and see us." Lyle Blake was too interesting a girl to pass out of their minds and be forgotten.

"Good luck Chechahcos," shouted a merry tourist from above.

Other friends made on the memorable trip through the panoramic Inside Passage said or waved their adieus, a few sadly, but most cheerily, as the official new-comers reached the gangway and carefully went ashore.

Whole-heartedly greeted by the Mayor and committees, the Governor and wife and daughter entered automobiles waiting them and a procession was formed which escorted them through winding plank streets to the Mansion. There he made a brief speech, expressing appreciation of the welcome to the home and land of his adoption.

In the evening, at a public reception, he voiced his aims, ambitions and dreams, in responding to addresses of welcome. Introductions, personal well-wishes and cordial hand-clasps followed, and the

evening was happily rounded out in dancing. The daughter, seventeen, not yet out of high school, required an aid in keeping account of her acceptances of invitations to dance.

Home! The Mansion was thrice the size of any other dwelling at the Capital. Eight years before, the Governor and wife, then tourists, had spent an hour within its walls and broken bread with its hospitable occupants when the big house was just completed. Therefore, they did not take up their abode therein as utter strangers. Kindly hands had sent flowers and the interior was cheerful and comfortable. The retiring official family, thoughtful and considerate, had put everything in perfect order. Unawed by the dimensions of rooms and hallways, with ample time for detailed observation and exploration, the new-comers proceeded to feel at home.

A cozy, comfortable study, with ash trays handy and reference books within reach, appealed to the Governor.

Chechahcos! The Chinook term was expressive of their status. Certainly it had not been given them to be reared in this Northland. Chechahcos they were not, however, or Tenderfeet, in lack of knowledge of the country. They knew its coasts and interior; had traveled the length of the Yukon and into the Arctic Ocean. Only in pioneering and seeing the ice come in and go out did they lack the qualifications of a Sourdough. Eligibility for the esteemed classification was yet possible. Meanwhile, Chechahcos let it be.

At home in Wonderland! Hail Juneau!

CHAPTER II.

A CHARMING YOUNG OPTIMIST

LYLE BLAKE, western in spirit and of birth, whose acquaintance they made on the trip northward, eagerly anticipated the experience in store for her and readily attuned herself to the frontier country.

A cheery, cheerful soul, she unobtrusively made friends at every turn. She had been a student at DePauw, earned a diploma at the Valparaiso (Indiana) Normal School and taught one term in an Oregon town. Through influential recommendations, she had then sought and secured a position as teacher in the Territorial schools and was now on her way to Fairbanks, proceeding by easy stages in order to gather information and study conditions. The meager population, the smallness of communities, did not disappoint or disturb her. She knew big cities, East and West, yet insisted, with evident sincerity, that she enjoyed small-town life the most.

Ketchikan, the first American port, making strides toward becoming a city, interested her intensely and she declared her longing to tarry there. She captivated the few people she met in her hurried hour's sight-seeing in the late evening and they expressed genuine regret that she could not stay.

She was no less enthusiastic about Wrangell and Petersburg, so unlike Ketchikan or each other, and permitted nothing of moment to escape her. The totems of Wrangell and the shrimps of Petersburg received her unqualified enconiums equally. She laughingly remarked that she could be happy with either "were 't'other dear charmer away."

Unaffectedly pleased, she communicated happiness to fellow travelers and added zest to the journey.

The mountains, the sea, the inlets and bays, the Narrows, the quarter-moon peeping through the gray clouds, the verdure on the hillsides and the snow on the summits, the twinkling rays from the light-houses—everything roused her ardent admiration; and when Taku Glacier was reached and seen in its blue-tinted morning glory her raptures knew no bounds. She would have held the steamer and let the gubernatorial celebration at Juneau wait, if she could.

Crossing Queen Charlotte Sound, the second day out from Seattle, she had succumbed briefly to rough waters, sharing sea-sickness with the Governor's daughter. Both came through the ordeal smiling. Sympathy cemented their friendship.

In further proof of her attunement to things in general, Lyle Blake had so shaped her daily programme that she should not miss any of the Governor's several speeches made in transit. In every audience he could see her listening intently. It tended to sharpen his wits and halt repetitions. He knew he was no orator and candidly admitted it, but she contradicted him amiably and insisted stoutly that, on Alaskan topics, at least, he was a spell-binder. Small wonder, therefore, that family fondness of the light-hearted, adaptable girl was not confined to the Governor's wife and daughter. They thought her "perfectly adorable." He assented cordially.

His interest in her was strengthened by the fact that she hailed from his native state. He was a very loyal Hoosier, and she, too, and she was remarkably well informed on the affairs of that commonwealth. She knew all about 'Gene Stratton Porter, George

Ade, Booth Tarkington, the McCutcheons, Meredith Nicholson and the later school of writers; had many of James Whitcomb Riley's poems at her tongue's end; admired Albert Jeremiah Beveridge, whose lecture on John Marshall she had recently heard, and was familiar with the meteor-like rise of Will Hays, whom she called "a political Napoleon." She was born and reared in Madison County and he in "Old Shelby," and, aboard the steamer, sitting on the hurricane deck or taking a promenade, accompanied by his wife, also a Hoosier, and his little daughter, who first saw the light in the Maryland Alleghanies, at the edge of Dixie, they proudly talked about Hoosier folk and discussed things of kindred mutual and engaging interest.

"How do your parents like your going so far away?" she was asked.

"I have but one," she answered, "my mother, and she's a dear. She misses me, naturally, but knows I am safe and can take care of myself, and is in sympathy with my ambition to see something of the world. I write her regularly and send her no end of post-cards and descriptive literature. She devours all this information and so becomes intimately familiar with my travels and places of abode. After a while we shall be reunited—perhaps up here. She made sacrifices in putting me through Normal, but I have since been self-sustaining, as I think every unmarried girl should try to be upon finishing school. But I am not a convert to any of the newfangled Twentieth Century ideas about womankind. While I prefer teaching to stenography and typewriting, and feel that I can in this way do some good, my ultimate aim is a home."

Her frankness was appealing.

The Governor remarked that single-blessedness on

the part of teachers was usually short-lived in this new land and added that her ultimate aim would, no doubt, quickly be reached.

"It is not in sight," she, smiling, answered and then, turning to the daughter, said: "How I've longed for a daddie! I cannot remember mine. He died when I was three."

Twenty-two years old, she seemed younger. She wore a brown tweed, tailor-made suit, with hat to match, and it set off her slim figure becomingly. A tangerine scarf gave a colorful touch to her costume, and a camera, attached to a strap about her shoulders, was her constant companion. Her dark hair was tinged with red; her eyes a sparkling brown, and a healthy tan bore testimony to the wholesome effects of out-door life and contact with nature. About five feet tall, she was a diminutive girl, yet alive with vitality. Occasionally she substituted a tam o'shanter for jaunts about the deck.

One evening at an entertainment in the social hall, following a short talk by the Governor and welcome to the tourists, upon reaching Alaskan waters, after crossing Dixon's Entrance, she served as piano accompanist to a soloist from Portland, and handled the keys with artistic skill.

Two days after reaching Juneau she called upon the official family and was presented to other callers. She had lost no time since her arrival, having gone through the mine, taken a ramble to Thane, tramped over the silver basin road, gone on an automobile trip, with other transients, to Mendenhall Glacier, become acquainted with the curio shops and, incidentally, had her camera snap-shots developed. To her new-made friends she presented duplicates of those in which they figured, and was so pleased with one of the daughter that, she said enthusiastically, "I

have ordered an enlargement and intend to have it framed."

She liked Juneau and found the people so kind and hospitable. "I just love them all," she said. It was "a homey place," but had "a citified air" which she could hardly comprehend in a community so small. She laughed over the queer little building called the capitol—a hehabilitated mission structure in a square of ground planted in potatoes. She had expected to find an impressive pile, built of Alaskan granite and marble, fittingly representative of the great Territory. As yet she had not called at the gubernatorial sanctum, but she meant to do so.

"I'm learning every day," she said. "Yesterday I was admiring a polar bear skin in a window and the owner was telling me what a fine and rare specimen it was when a pleasant, well-dressed gentleman stopped to look at it. The dealer lost interest in me and gave attention to him. He looked more like ready money than I, no doubt.

" 'That's not a polar bear skin,' said the pleasant-looking man after a 'once over,' as they say. 'It's a goat skin,' and he walked on quickly, a trifle ruffled by the episode, I thought.

"Today I saw him coming down the court-house steps and was told he was the District Attorney, just arrived from Ketchikan. Wasn't it funny to mistake him for a Chickawoo?"

"Chechahco," corrected the daughter.

"Yes, I know," she rejoined, "but I keep getting it wrong. I'm practicing every spare moment on these strange names—Chichagoff, where the rich mine is; Kuskokwim, where your Surveyor General comes from; Susitna, Matanuska, Tanana and the like. I shall master them. And if I see the ice go out

at Fairbanks I'll be a Sourdough. Won't that be splendid?"

She inquired in a whisper of the Governor's wife whether it would be proper to attend the jitney dance to be given in the evening when the steamer Princess arrived. The Governor's wife asked the Mayor's wife and she answered affirmatively. Everybody patronized these dances when they pleased and enjoyed them. Juneau was independent and democratic enough to take its pleasure at will. Good order was uniformly maintained, she said, and the dances were above criticism.

"It is quite in form to go," reassured the Territorial Treasurer's wife, "and you should not miss it."

Thus fortified, Lyle Blake attended the jitney and did not sit out a dance. The daughter was also there having the time of her young life, and the Governor and wife sat in a box, surrounded by friends, with an army officer of the road commission acting as aide, and enjoyed the spectacle immensely.

Whether she should journey to Fairbanks by way of Cordova-Chitna or Valdez and in over the Richardson trail from either place, a three days' trip by automobile, or go by way of Seward and Anchorage over the government railroad to the end of steel, at Broad Pass, and thence by broken trail to Healy, the other end of steel, a hard jaunt; or whether she should take the older and still easier, if slower, route from Skagway by the White Pass railroad over the Summit (scene of the Klondike stampede) to Whitehorse, in the Yukon Territory, and thence down the Yukon River by steamer to Dawson and on in American water through Circle, Eagle, Ft. Yukon (in the Arctic Circle)—on, on and on to Tanana (Ft. Gib-

bon) and up the Tanana River to her destination—Lyle Blake was in a quandry to decide.

She studied the map and advised with the Judge and discussed routes with other friends at the Zynda and counselled with the Governor in the little made-over mission building called the capitol.

The Governor looked with greater favor at this juncture upon the established trail or the river route, as he had heard that the gap between steel on the railroad line was rough at best and in case of rain all but impassable. However, he assured her that she could make the trip in perfect safety, if perchance, with some discomfort, by any route she might elect.

"Oh, I am not afraid," she laughed. "I can hike and take pot luck with the sourdoughs and meet any emergency. Trust me for that."

The army man of the road commission, who was "so very nice" uniformly and had gone with her on one of her window-shopping tours, graphically described the beauties of the trail and promised to expedite her journey. The Keystone Canyon and Thompson's Pass, out of Valdez, and the Copper River Valley and mountains, out of Cordova, and the chain of lakes out of Chitina, and the views of smoking Mt. Wrangell and the Alaska Range from points on the trail, and the road houses made an almost irresistible appeal to her. She felt she must have the experiences of the trail. But Skagway, the White Pass, the rapids at Whitehorse and the great, winding Yukon also beckoned alluringly. Opportunities to travel on the railroad, when completed, would be many, she reasoned, and she could come out over the trail at the close of the school year.

All things considered, she finally decided upon the White Pass and Yukon route, with the Governor's full approval. He foresaw a suspension of

river transportation facilities in large measure, as time went on, because of natural diversion of freight and passenger traffic to the railroad.

"You will not neglect a pilgrimage to 'Soapy' Smith's grave at Skagway, or a visit to Robert Service's cabin at Dawson, or an inspection of Rex Beach's shack at Rampart," enjoined the Governor.

"Not I," said the girl. "I'll pause and drop a tear for 'Soapy,' tarry in poetic reverence at the Dawson cabin and carve my initials on the Rampart shack. I talked with your Stroller here and he gave me hints which I jotted down and armed me with a letter to Yukon tillicums."

The Spokane was due the following day, and Lyle Blake, her itinerary definitely settled, made a reservation thereon for Skagway. She was impulsively moved to take the Estabeth, a mail gas boat, that very night, but was easily persuaded to wait for the large steamer. It arrived at noon and remained in channel ports unloading and taking on freight until 6 o'clock. The afternoon interim was given over to leave-takings.

Save for her cheerful disposition, the adieus would have become tearful.

In her farewell to the Governor's wife at the Mansion her deep affection disclosed itself sweetly.

"You have been so good and kind to me," she said, "and it means so much to me. You will hear from my dear mother. I've written her all about you and yours. It is a memorable experience to have traveled with you and witnessed the celebration and been received into your home."

Then, after an embrace, brushing away a tear, accompanied by the daughter, she went lightly down the street, waving a final good-bye as she turned the corner.

At the dock a score of Juneau friends, a majority from the Zynda, had assembled. They laughed and chatted gayly to hide their sorrow at her departure. Her week's sojourn had made abiding friendships.

When the fifteen-minute whistle blew she drew the Governor's daughter to her and hugged her closely.

"Daddie will be in Fairbanks soon after you arrive," said the daughter. He was scheduled to go westward and in over the trail a fortnight hence.

"Yes, I know," said Lyle, "and I should be supremely joyful if he were bringing you along. He will be too busy to give me more than a handshake and smile. But I shall be cheering for him on the sidelines."

"He promises to take us—Mammie and me—next Summer," reassured the daughter.

"Blessed thought! Speed the day," she responded.

A short distance away the United States Attorney, talking with the Marshal, who was going to Sitka, via Skagway, looked toward the group and lifted his hat.

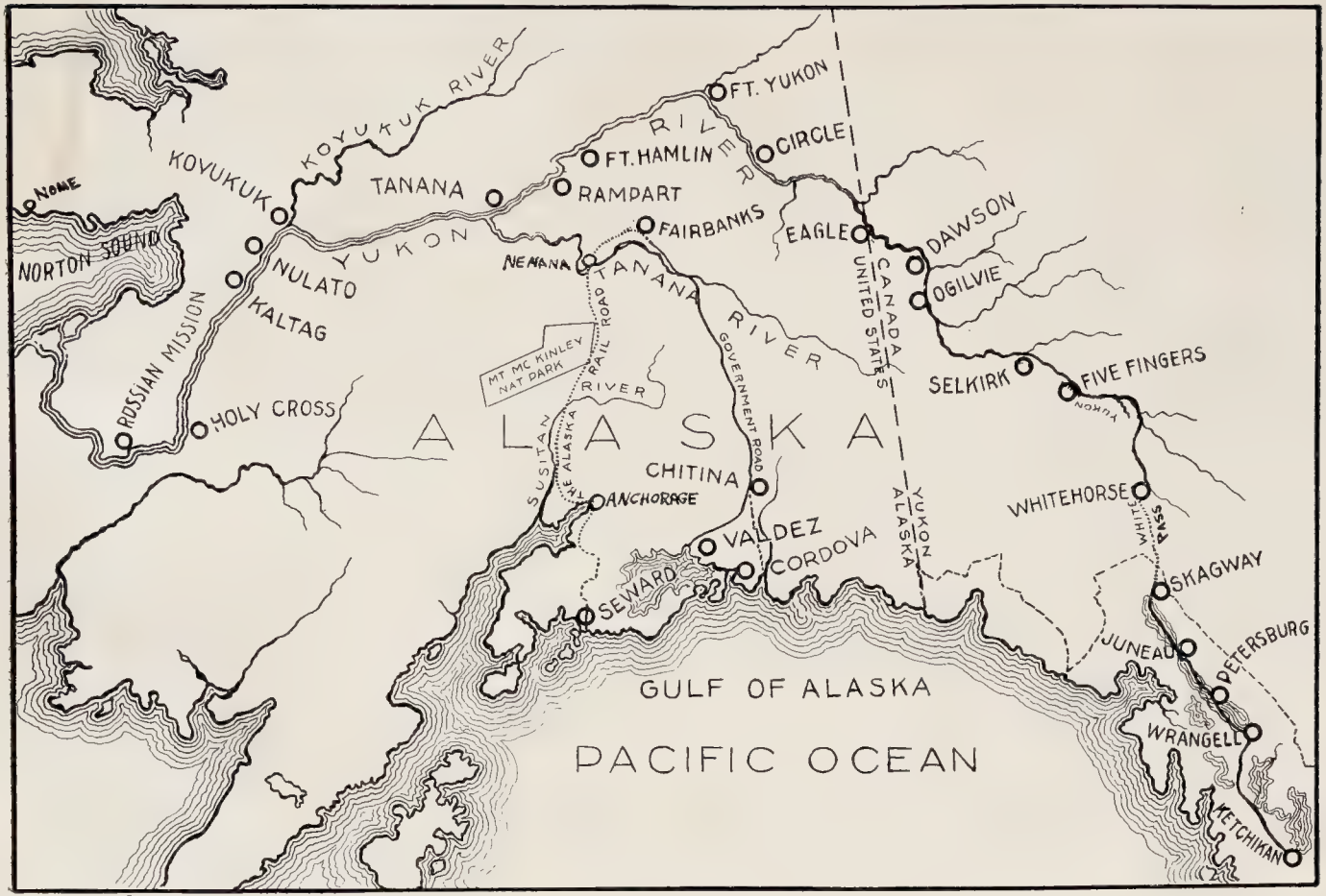
"You haven't decided to buy that polar bear skin?" inquired Lyle, merrily.

"No, I am not in the market," he answered. "But if you want that goat skin I'll seize it for you."

"Don't bother," she said. "I'll be on the look-out for a better specimen."

Thereupon the Attorney introduced the Marshal, who—fortunate man!—politely installed himself as personal aide and escort to the popular girl on the voyage out of Gastineau Channel through Stephen's Passage and up Lynn Canal to Haines and Skagway.

Final *au revoirs* spoken, she ran up the gangplank, disappeared for a moment and reappeared at the rail on the upper deck. The Marshal, guardian-


KOYUKUK RIVER
FT. YUKON
YUKON RIVER
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TANANA
RAMPART
NOME
FAIRBANKS
EAGLE
DAWSON
NORTON SOUND
NULATO
YUKON
NENANA
TANANA RIVER
OGILVIE
CANADA
UNITED STATES
KALTAG
MT MC KINLEY NAT PARK
RAIL ROAD
RIVER
SELKIRK
FIVE FINGERS
YUKON
RUSSIAN MISSION
HOLY CROSS
A L A S K A
GOVERNMENT ROAD
SUSITAN
THE ALASKA
CHITINA
ANCHORAGE
WHITEHORSE
YUKON ALASKA
WHITE PASS
VALDEZ
CORDOVA
SKAGWAY
SEWARD
JUNEAU
PETERSBURG
GULF OF ALASKA
WRANGELL
PACIFIC OCEAN
KETCHIKAN

like, stood proudly beside her. She levelled her camera at the sorrowing group ashore, focusing it upon the Governor's sad-eyed daughter, for a parting snap-shot.

"Smile and look pleasant," cheerily shouted the girl. "There"—clickety click—"I caught you!"

Hats and handkerchiefs waved as the steamer put out into the harbor and soon vanished in the mist.

Lyle Blake was on her way toward the top of the World.

CHAPTER III.

A TEACHER WHO DID NOT COME

WHEN the Governor reached Fairbanks on his first official trip into the interior he was surprised to find among the telegrams awaiting him this one from his wife:

> "Has Lyle Blake arrived? No word. Her mother very anxious."

He had not caught sight of her "cheering on the sidelines." Indeed, in the splendid welcome given him and the half-holiday celebration incident thereto, she had not come into his mind. Now he thought about her, but with no disquietude or alarm.

The Mayor was with him and he handed him the message.

"Oh, she's the new teacher," said that official. "I do not believe she is here, but I'll learn."

He telephoned to the school superintendent, who said she had not arrived, but was expected soon. As the school would not open for a month the delay was unimportant.

"These river boats make many landings," the Mayor observed, "and latterly we do not look for travelers on the Yukon until they come. Do you know which steamer she took?"

The Governor was uninformed. He felt no apprehension and remarked that she would certainly put in a cheery appearance shortly. True, she left Juneau three weeks ago, but she might have stopped at Dawson or at one of the missions, where she would be welcomed, for a little visit. Her mother naturally could not hear from her promptly, as distances were great and mails slow.

Undisturbed and with confidence in the girl's ability to take care of herself, and full of faith in his territorial countrymen to protect her wherever she might be or elect to go, the Governor wired reassuringly to his wife:

> "Not here yet, but expected any time. River service irregular and delays frequent. Telegraph her mother not to worry. No occasion for alarm."

The Archdeacon, successor to the late mountain-climbing Stuck, now buried at Ft. Yukon, and the Surveyor General of the Territory, who were traveling with the Governor, were confident no ill could befall the young teacher. Both knew the country well, especially the Surveyor General, who had mushed over a large part of it, and declared there was no safer country in all the world. A white woman was sacred in the eyes of Alaskans, and a girl like Lyle Blake would be doubly so. She was safer in Alaska, or even in the unsettled Yukon, than she would be in any large city in the States. They told of teachers traveling securely by dog team from the coast to Eagle and Circle or to Iditarod or M'Grath or to Bethel and Akiak, in the far Kuskokwim, and stopping at lonely road-houses on the way without thought of danger.

The Surveyor General glowed with pride as he mentioned a particular case in point, and the Governor cited the women road-house keepers on the trail they had traversed.

At Copper Center, where a Signal Corps station was maintained and where the road-house keeper was the only white woman within a radius of miles, they had laughed over a sign at the cross-roads which, in bold letters, read:

> "Wanted—Twelve wives. Apply at the garage."

As twelve men for twelve wives in that remote lo-

cality at that time would have loomed as large as a mass convention, and as garages had not come into vogue at Copper Center, the sign was quite indicative of the humor of the trail.

The Governor's party covered the overland trip of 372 miles from Valdez to Fairbanks in three days, less four hours, stopping at night at Tiekell, Sourdough and Richardson, and pausing for mid-day meals at Copper Center and Rapids.

For the last ninety miles, after crossing the Tanana at M'Carty, the character of the country had changed radically, and the final stretch of roadway was as smooth as an asphalt boulevard. The scent of civilization and growing crops could be felt, and one became conscious of life ahead. Behind lay the flats. Crossing these, after winding about the Dome, solitude marked the aspect, which was unrelieved for thirty miles, save by a gang of Signal Corps linemen engaged in repair work and a road commission truck rattling toward the summit. Beale's Cache could be seen far ahead, but when reached was evidently deserted. Once over the river at M'Carty, however, the prospect underwent a pleasing change and the melancholiness of the aspect disappeared.

From the wilds the Governor and party had emerged into civilization.

At an average speed of fifteen miles an hour, the skillful and careful M'Cafferty at the wheel, the sturdy "Lizzy" carrying the Governor and his two companions, with a baggage auto trailing, had covered 150 miles from Sourdough to Richardson the second day and could easily have completed the remaining journey by midnight. But the travelers were tired, and arrival in the daytime was desirable and a rest overnight advisable.

Fairbanks awaited the visitation expectantly. The

Mayor and a committee prepared to meet the party at Nine-Mile or Bergman's, a few miles farther out on the highway.

At the end of the long, long trail (the Governor spoke of it as "The Trail of the Lonesome Spruce") was the commercial center of the interior.

A leisurely start the morning of the third day brought them to their destination in good time. The committee was intercepted before it reached Nine-Mile and greetings were exchanged. Then the Governor's party, in woolen shirts, travel-stained, transferred to larger cars in waiting and soon made a triumphal entry into Fairbanks through arches inscribed "WELCOME." Here the population had gathered largely and the Governor received a warm-hearted greeting. The Mayor's little daughter presented him a huge floral key to the city, amid the plaudits of the multitude, and an automobile procession, headed by a band, was formed and escorted him through the gaily decorated streets to a beautiful bungalow home set apart for official occupancy during his stay. There, or rather, at the intersection of streets, where the autos stopped, an impromptu and informal reception ensued. The Governor went from car to car and was cordially greeted by men, women and children.

Fairbanks was in attractive garb. Flowers abounded and pretty homes were literally covered with pansies and alive with color. A model farm on the outskirts revealed the richness of the soil in wonderful vegetables and other food products. Thriving homesteads dotted the valley for miles around.

The Governor, eight years before, as a tourist, had visited Fairbanks and grasped its possibilities and resources. Then, however, he was skeptical about the adaptability of the soil to wheat. Now it was a dem-

onstrated fact. Cereal of excellent quality averaging twenty-two to thirty bushels was grown without difficulty and there had never been a crop failure.

The live evening paper was off the press when the Governor's party arrived. It had been alert to keep track of his movements through the Signal Corps. Just before noon the operator at Salcha wired a bulletin, and the paper—the News-Miner—printed it conspicuously and verbatim in a box on the first page:

> GOVERNOR NEAR
> Salchaket—10 a. m.—Governor and party just passed here going like a bat out of hell.

It suggested red-devil speeding, and the Archdeacon—too human and too confirmed a sourdough to be shocked—laughed heartily over it. He could testify that the "Lizzy's" limit under pressure was twenty miles an hour and remarked that a bat escaping from the infernal regions ought really to fly faster. As chaplain to the Governor he had said grace at the road-houses and given spiritual comfort to him over pipe, cigarette and cigar; now he felt in duty bound to send marked copies of the paper to mutual friends back East, and religiously proceeded to do so.

A tonsorial establishment's half holiday was broken to put the visitors in form for a sumptuous evening dinner—as choice in viands as Delmonico could serve—and a public meeting and reception following, where speeches were made, and the chaplain proudly proclaimed the fact that he and the Governor possessed fourteen children, thus exciting curiosity as to the quota embraced in the family circle of each and putting himself so *en rapport* with the peo-

ple as to insure him an audience at the Sunday service he was to hold the next day but one.

A brilliantly-worded editorial, potent with cordiality and sentiment, covering the episodes of the celebration and reception, appeared in the next issue of the paper, fittingly captioned "End of a Perfect Day," and the attentive Chaplain likewise transmitted marked copies of it to mutual friends back East.

The Governor's two days' stay in Fairbanks was memorable. He had never met finer people. They captured his heart. The vastness of the country overwhelmed him. It was God's country. He dreamed day dreams of its future and could see in Fairbanks a great and flourishing inland city of days to come. His optimism grew as acquaintances and friendships multiplied. He visited the Agricultural College and School of Mines, in course of construction, the first institution of higher learning in the Territory and to be opened and dedicated in a year; inspected the experimental farm, and numerous thriving homesteads, the mining creeks and the new flouring mill; and became indifferent to the plague of mosquitoes in the consuming interest of it all.

A trip over the narrow-gauge branch of the government railroad to Nenana, sixty miles away, where he received a welcome and reception no less sincere, was another event of his limited stay. Here a great 700-foot single-span steel bridge for the railroad was to be built over the Tanana River.

Returning from Nenana, other Fairbanks functions, fraternal and social, were in store for the Governor and party until their departure on the return trip over the trail, this time by way of Chitina.

As the Mayor was taking his leave of the Governor, he said:

"I learn through the Commercial Company that Miss Blake took passage on the Selkirk at Whitehorse. It runs only to Dawson. Doubtless she stopped there and will arrive duly by a smaller craft. I will wire you when she comes."

"Thank you. I am sure she is all right," said the Governor.

At the ferry crossing, near Munson's, where the official party stopped for luncheon, a group of young people in hiking costumes, chaperoned by a cultured and delightful Fairbanks matron, utilized the opportunity to take pictures and become better acquainted. The Governor, the Surveyor and the Chaplain readily assented to being photographed with the group on condition that they be rewarded with copies of the productions—a condition dutifully fulfilled, and duly appreciated when received weeks later. How his daughter would enjoy such an outing! thought the Governor. And cheery Lyle Blake! Wouldn't she be in her element? Momentarily a bit of concern entered his mind. But he was too practical to entertain it, and banished it. He assured himself that tidings of the girl would soon be forthcoming.

Reaching Birch Lake, an entrancing, azure-tinted body of water sixty miles out, where pickerel and other fishes furnished rare sport, and cozy, sheltered nooks provided choice picknicking retreats, other young folks were enjoying themselves. At this particular hour the mosquito pest was at its worst and the wearing of head nets necessary for protection.

Stopping overnight again at Richardson, the travelers reached Paxon's in the afternoon, and there, after an appetizing dinner, at which grayling, fresh from Summit Lake, formed the piece de resistance, they participated in a notable christening ceremony conducted by the Archdeacon.

En route inside the week previous four beautiful, blue-eyed children stood in stair-step formation in front of this road-house, in eager wonder watching the new arrivals. The Governor shook hands with them warmly and asked their names. All born in the wilds, the eldest, a daughter, was eight, and youngest, a boy, two. The mother had come from Yorkshire to the Yukon Territory, twelve years ago, and been wedded to a member of the Mounted Police, who, retiring from the force, had kept a road-house on Canadian soil for a time and then crossed over into Alaska and established this stopping place on the trail. Three of the children had been christened, two at Fairbanks and one at Cordova, and now the brave little mother was hoping that Bishop Rowe would soon reach there and christen the baby boy. Elated to find that the Archdeacon was in the Governor's party, she asked him to render the needed service and he gladly assented, but suggested that the ceremony be deferred until the return trip.

Thus arrangements were in readiness at this time and the ceremony immediately followed dinner.

Archdeacon in over'all and corduroy, Governor and Surveyor General in woolen shirts, father in apron from attendance at the table, and road superintendent in working garb, but the mother and offspring neatly frocked, the christening scene was unique and impressive in the extreme. The Governor insisted subsequently that it had left a brighter spot in his memory than any elaborate ceremony he had ever witnessed. Moreover, he acquired a godson in the christening and the baby boy his last name as a middle name.

A night at Miers', a brief stop at Sourdough, midday meal at Gulkana, dinner at Tonsina, from which a fine view of smoking Wrangell was had, and an

evening ride into Chitina, through gorgeous lake and mountain scenery, ended the return trip over the trail.

Two friendly brown bears had ventured in sight and scampered into the woods on the round-trip journey.

The next day was given over to a ride in a "speeder," an automobile body on wheels, on the Copper River railroad to Kennecott and M'Carthy and return; and the next, by the same conveyance, to Cordova, with a stop at Childs and Miles Glaciers.

Sunshine had prevailed continuously beyond the coastal range, but rainfall persisted for four days at Cordova, where, waiting the steamer, they discussed fish problems while otherwise being cordially entertained.

In the forwarded mail from the Capital were letters from home. One of them said that another message had come from Lyle Blake's mother, showing keenest anxiety and urging that an effort be made quietly to trace her daughter's whereabouts. Her address was given, and the Governor telegraphed her a reassuring message intended to quiet her fears. He concluded it with these words:

> "Your daughter is certainly safe and will soon be heard from."

CHAPTER IV.

ANXIOUSLY AWAITING TIDINGS

AGAIN at his desk, an accumulation of work pressed him; but, still unworried, he gave attention to the case of Lyle Blake. He declined as yet to put her in the category of missing people and institute an official search, but, beginning to feel solicitous, he made judicious inquiry in a manner not to give rise to gossip or excite alarm.

"You had a pleasant trip to Skagway with Miss Blake?" he casually remarked in conversation with the Marshal.

"Yes, out of Gastineau Channel," he answered. "Then I lost her."

"Lost her?"

"Her companionship, I mean. I lost that unhappily by introducing a younger and handsomer man, Wayne Roberts, who was going to Mayo. He proceeded to pre-empt her for the remainder of the journey. I don't blame him. They were congenial. Roberts is a gentleman and a fine chap."

"From Juneau?" inquired the Governor, with feigned abstraction as he signed a letter.

"No; from Denver—a mining engineer, lately employed in British Columbia and now commissioned to examine the silver and lead properties in the new Yukon camp. I met him while the Spokane was in port. The Empire printed a paragraph about him, you may recall."

"A young man?" pursued the Governor, not recalling the paragraph.

"About thirty, I should say, and well known. He was overseas with an engineering corps during the

war and must have been in Brest when I was there. He is a graduate of the Boston Tech. and wears a Delta Tau Delta fraternity pin."

"You don't overlook anything?"

"I've a talent for detail, you know."

"It was a case of love at first sight?"

"Hardly that. She was pleasant with everybody, but found him the most interesting. He was very attentive. They strolled about Ft. Seward and Haines the next morning and he bought her a pretty pair of moccasins from an Indian woman, which she showed me with pride. The White Pass train was made up and in waiting at Skagway and he reluctantly left her there in order to make connection at Whitehorse and Dawson. She remained over for two days and I said good-bye to her at the Pullen House in the evening."

Naturally the young man would be reluctant to part with so bright and attractive a girl. The Governor saw nothing unusual in that, nor in the fact of the introduction. It was customary aboard ship to become acquainted. But he resolved to learn more about Wayne Roberts.

The daughter had received a postcard from the young teacher, dated at Skagway two days after she left Juneau, on which she had written:

> "Have revelled all afternoon in relics and curios and heard all about the departed 'Soapy' from A to Z. Great days—those of '98. On to Whitehorse tomorrow. Love."

When, at dinner, the Governor narrated the meeting with Wayne Roberts, his wife and daughter were eagerly interested. They, too, wished additional information of the young man, scenting a possible romance, if not a clue. But she had stopped and he gone on; and she was so artlessly frank, the daugh-

ter said, that, had he captured her fancy, or made a deep impression, she would have mentioned him.

Again the Governor quieted their fears, while admitting that he himself was puzzled over her silence. Six weeks had elapsed. She had not reached Fairbanks or the Mayor would have telegraphed.

"Is it not advisable to wire him and ask?" suggested his wife. "Possibly he has forgotten his promise to notify you."

The Governor hesitated to follow the suggestion, lest it show undue concern and create needless alarm. Experience had taught him that the wires sometimes "leaked." But he framed and sent a message, nevertheless—ostensibly an official message, with only an incidental query whether the teacher had arrived.

An answer came promptly. She had not arrived, but was expected on the next boat.

Meeting the Superintendent of the mine, the Governor asked:

"Is the Mayo camp as rich as reports have it?"

"It is certainly rich," said he, "or the ore could not be transported to Dawson and all the way down the Yukon River and out at St. Michael and by sea to the smelter at San Francisco. Only the richest ore could stand such freightage. Lead predominates, I am told, and it is largely discarded, but much of the ore is literally charged with the highest grade silver. It is a wonderful discovery. There is only the question of the extent of the veins and beds."

"Will it mean a stampede?"

"Nothing like the stampedes of old. But Mayo is likely to be a populous camp, and may become a second Dawson."

The Governor spoke of Wayne Roberts and received satisfactory enlightenment.

"He is not representing our company," said the

Superintendent, "but we know him. He is one of the most capable of the younger school of mining engineers and his judgment of properties is appraised highly. He comes originally from Connecticut, I believe, and has influential connections in the East. Since he returned from the war, he has had his headquarters at Denver, but for several months has been engaged in work in Canada. One man's report rarely governs large investments, but if Wayne Roberts' findings bear out what appears to be known about Mayo big capital will go into the camp and improved means of transportation will quickly follow."

"A railroad to Dawson?"

"More probably an extension of the White Pass. There are tremendous difficulties of construction, but they can be overcome. I look to see Yukon Territory's population, now only 5,000, multiply rapidly."

Clearly Lyle Blake had met a remarkably fine young man. Moreover, in spusuit of personal information, the Governor had received confirmatory knowledge concerning prospective mining developments of great importance.

The Princess Mary, the Canadian liner, brought three days' mail that evening, and in it an appealing letter from Lyle Blake's mother in Indiana.

She wrote in deep distress. Always since her daughter had been away she had heard from her with punctual regularity. It was part of her daily life to write. She was never negligent, but uniformly dutiful. Now she was not writing at all. Only a line from Skagway had come since she left Juneau weeks ago. She must be ill or something had happened. The mother said she could not longer bear the anxiety and would come to Alaska and go in search, if she did not receive good news at once. She

thanked the Governor for his reassuring message, but now her heart was breaking.

"Please, please find her," she pleaded. "I cannot stand the suspense."

Prompt of action, the Governor immediately sent a rush telegram to the grief-striken mother, telling her that everything possible would be done to trace the girl.

During the night a messenger brought to the Mansion a telegram from Mrs. Blake which said she was starting to the coast and would reach Juneau by the first steamer from Seattle.

Early the next morning, Mark Field, a young sourdough, after a conference with the Governor, who trusted him implicitly, started by gas boat to Skagway en route to Whitehorse and down the river as far as need be. He knew the ins and outs of the Northland, its waters, its mountains, its trails and its people. He would find Lyle Blake, if she could be found.

His assignment, Mark Field understood, was confidential. He had previously served similarly as an investigator and did not require detailed instruction. Discreet by nature and absolutely trustworthy, he was informed of the girl's meeting with Wayne Roberts and her movements up to and including her first day at Skagway, and told to trace her minutely. He was to learn just when she left Skagway and whom she met on the train over the White Pass; where she stopped and all the incidents of her stay at Whitehorse; verify the word received at Fairbanks that she had taken passage on the river boat Selkirk; interview the purser and others with whom she traveled, and learn precisely when she reached Dawson, if she did reach there, and where she stopped and

whom she met and what she did and when she journeyed on.

In short, he was commissioned to "trace and find the girl." It was unnecessary to urge the exercise of caution. He knew and would carry out his instructions in his own way and without causing alarm or bringing the young teacher into notoriety. He was given credentials and a telegraph code and proceeded on the assumption that Lyle Blake was safe, though possibly ill or otherwise unavoidably detained.

Ordinarily a trip from the East or Middle West to the Territorial capital consumes eight days, at at the least, and is shortened only by the use of limited trains and close connections by rail and steamer. Three days after the receipt of the telegram from the girl's mother, announcing her departure for the coast, another came from Seattle, saying that she was sailing on the Jefferson and asking whether there was any news. The adage, "No news is good news," did not hold true in the answer sent.

The Jefferson reached Juneau on schedule and the distracted mother was easily recognized in the unaccompanied woman descending the gangway. She seemed younger than her years—forty-five, Lyle had said—but her hair was freely frostened and her manner matronly and mature.

"Yes, I am Lyle's mother—Mrs. Harold Blake," she said as she shook hands with the Governor and wife.

She was calm and inquired instantly: 'You have no word for me?" adding, sorrowfully, when he shook his head, "I feared not."

She demurred to going to the Mansion. "It is good of you to meet me," she said, "and I so appreciate your kindness and must have a talk with you, but I

shall go on to Skagway tonight. The boat will be here until 11 o'clock.

"In the meantime, we can talk at the house," the Governor suggested.

She assented, but would take no baggage. Her state-room was reserved to Skagway.

The Governor told her of the steps he had taken to trace her daughter and expressed the utmost confidence that she would soon be found. If ill, she was surely in good hands, for the people of this Northland were proverbially kind and helpful. He advanced no theory, but counselled patience and courage on her part, and advised her to remain in Juneau pending a report from Mark Field.

Just as they reached the house the Governor's daughter came in and Mrs. Blake rose and hugged her warmly, saying: "I know you, my dear, dear child. Lyle made us well acquainted weeks ago. She loves you. I love you."

Then she held her off and looked at her intently. "Yes, you are just as she pictured you. I should have recognized you in a crowd," and she embraced her anew.

For an instant Mrs. Blake seemed on the verge of a breakdown, but recovered bravely.

The Governor's wife spoke of friends in the native State whom they mutually knew and this served to divert the grieved mother's thoughts.

She gazed constantly at the daughter. "If I only had mine," she said sadly, and, again and again, "I must find her."

She was sure something had happened or Lyle would have written. "The blessed girl never failed me."

For an hour after dinner they talked earnestly, going over the details of Lyle's happy little visit in

Juneau and telling of the admiration and affection she had inspired.

"When will you hear from Mr. Field?" asked the mother, abruptly.

"Tomorrow, no doubt. The Estabeth will be in and should have his reports from Skagway and Whitehorse. He wired that a letter was on the way."

"And I shall be gone," she said, "and cannot hear."

"You should remain," urged the Governor's wife. "This is the center of information."

Seeing the situation in a practical light, she decided to remain in Juneau for a few days. She insisted upon going to the Zynda, but consented to stop at the Mansion overnight, and her reservation was cancelled and baggage brought from the boat.

Mark Field's report, which was received the next day, was filled with interesting detail, but disappointing in that it did not disclose the girl's whereabouts.

Her sojourn at Skagway was as an open book. He chronicled every material incident of it from the moment Wayne Roberts took leave of her and boarded his train en route to Mayo until she departed on the same train en route to Fairbanks two days later. She had seen everything to be seen, including "Soapy" Smith's grave; become acquainted with all the leading people, devoted hours to the curio rooms at the Pullen and acquired intimate and exhaustive information about Skagway and the Klondike and Dyea trails and the historic stampede.

New-made friends escorted her to the White Pass station and saw her off. She installed herself in a seat in the center of the Pullman observation car and was in fine spirits as the train pulled out. It was a clear day and the views of the mountains were exceptionally fine. The conductor recalled how en-

thusiastic she was throughout the journey and how she had taken pictures of the international boundary stone and the two flags at the Summit. Here her baggage was examined by the customs officer, who noted her name on her trunk and explained that she would have to wait a day at Whitehorse for the Selkirk and could only check her baggage to Dawson, where she would transfer to another steamer. She expressed a desire to see the wonders of Lake Atlin, and the conductor insisted that she had ample time for this side trip, but she would not risk missing the Selkirk and went on.

Reaching Whitehorse, terminus of the White Pass railroad, late in the afternoon, she had taken a room, Field learned, at the little hotel, where she registered, "Lyle Blake, Fairbanks." The Selkirk was not due until morning and would be in port taking on freight until probably midnight. This she ascertained upon arrival, and she proceeded to see the sights and make herself at home.

Once she had been to Niagara Falls, she told the landlord, and taken a trolley ride across into Canada, but now, for the first time in her life, she was to spend a night on foreign soil, and the experience appealed to her. She called herself a Chechahco and discovered that this term was quite as freely used in the Yukon Territory as in Alaska in referring to new-comers. During the long evening she rambled about the town and went out to the Rapids with two women tourists who had been to Dawson and were now returning to the States.

She bought Canadian stamps and postcards, he learned, and evidently intended writing. Indeed, the landlord said, she inquired for the writing-room and put in an hour at the desk up-stairs soon after she registered.

Late in the evening, near midnight, though it was still twilight, she went to the piano and played several popular airs. Then she accompanied one of the tourists, who had a pleasing soprano voice, and who sang "Annie Laurie," "Silver Threads" and other favorite airs of the long ago. Guests gathered and the parlor was filled.

Among the auditors was Wes Litchfield, a character well known on the river from Dawson to Nome. He claimed acquaintance with Robert Service, Rex Beach and Jack London. Although nearing, if not beyond, sixty, he was physically strong and well preserved. He was clean shaven and his hair was almost snow white. Pleased with Lyle Blake's playing, he urged her to keep on. She was obliging, and for half an hour gave melody after melody, to his delight. While others listened silently he applauded frequently, and when she arose from the instrument he complimented her in a courtly manner. He was passionately fond of music, and it was a treat to him to hear an artist play. He himself sometimes toyed with the piano and was said to have developed talent with the guitar.

Charmed by Lyle Blake's personality, as well as her music, after voicing the pleasure she had given him, he engaged her in conversation. She was in merry mood and called him "Mr. Sourdough" and asked many questions about the great country in which he had passed a quarter of a century. He had never been "out," he said, not even as far as Skagway, and now expected to stay "in" for the rest of his years.

She endeavored tactfully to learn something of his early history and antecedents, but he politely evaded definite answers. He remarked that he had not seen Fairbanks in ten years, but planned to go there

shortly and hoped to see her and hear her play again. He was starting down the river in his boat tomorrow. She promised to be looking for him at Fairbanks.

Their animated chatter, the landlord said, held the attention of the tourists and other guests, who enjoyed it heartily.

As scheduled, the Selkirk tied up at the wharf early next morning and, immediately after breakfast, Lyle Blake went aboard to look after her trunk and see the state-room she was to occupy. A miner's wife, Jane Carmody, going to Eagle, would share the room with her, the purser told her. Every reservation was taken, and, as the little steamer would not get under way until midnight and no meals would be served that day, he advised her to remain at the hotel, where she would be more comfortable, until evening. She again viewed the Rapids, strolled along the river and accompanied her tourist friends to their train. Meantime, emulating fellow feminine travelers, she had donned her hiking costume.

In the early evening, "Mr. Sourdough"—Wes Litchfield—appeared in the lobby to say a second good-bye. He beamed upon the girl in a fatherly way and showed much sentiment in telling the pleasure she had given him. She was standing by her suitcase and he volunteered to carry it to the steamer, as he was going that way, and they went out together.

All this information Mark Field obtained from the landlord and a Whitehorse store-keeper, to whom The Stroller, at Juneau, had given her a letter of introduction, and from the purser of the Selkirk, which, fortunately, was in port.

In conclusion, Field wrote:

"It is strange that neither the captain nor the purser could remember anything about the girl on the river trip from Whitehorse to Dawson. The boat was crowded and the freight heavy and they were very busy. The purser could only tell me that he had assigned her to a state-room with Mrs. Carmody. The steward who attended that section quit after this trip and had gone 'out,' and others of the crew did not recall her. One of them vaguely recollected that two women had exchanged berths after leaving Whitehorse.

"The passengers are now scattered. Some went to Mayo, others stopped at Dawson, and others went on down the river to Eagle, Circle, Ft. Yukon, Tanana and off into the interior.

"I am starting to Dawson tonight."

In a separate note to the Governor, Field said he could not believe that Wes Litchfield was connected with the girl's disappearance. He knew him to be a kindly, well-educated old fellow, who, in early life, was deft at cards and dice, and called "a square sport," and who had since accumulated a little money dealing in furs and mining claims. He owned a good gas boat and generally operated it on the lower river. He was "a sort of diamond in the rough," Field added, "and I have heard no ill spoken of him. I hope to see him at Dawson."

Mrs. Blake listened to the reading of the report without comment until it was finished.

"Of course she wrote to me," then said the mother. "She never failed. But what became of her letters." She stressed the fact that her daughter had bought Canadian stamps and postcards and gone to the writing-room of the hotel. Certainly mail from across the border could not be so long delayed.

It puzzled the Governor and family equally.

Mrs. Blake had taken a room at the Zynda during the day and now she started to go. At the door of the

Mansion a messenger appeared with a telegram. The Governor asked her to wait. It was from Mark Field at Dawson and read:

> "Trunk here unclaimed. Held for storage. On to Eagle tonight. Report follows."

The Governor was non-plussed. Why was Field going to Eagle? It seemed foolish. If she had not reached Dawson, why look beyond? But he trusted the young man.

Mrs. Blake was sobbing as she went.

CHAPTER V.

THE QUEST AND SUSPENSE

MARK FIELD was not a detective. He had never enacted such a role and would scout the suggestion of being a sleuth. But he was singularly well qualified to pursue an investigation because of his wide acquaintance, his discretion and judgment, his poise and good sense. A big, manly man, still youthful looking, although thirty-six, his life in the great outdoors had kept him in perfect physical condition. He possessed the attributes of a giant or trained athlete. His brown eye was clear as crystal, his teeth white and even, his brow massive, forecasting early baldness, his manners frank and open and his personality altogether attractive and engaging. By nature gentle as a well-bred woman, he had encountered hard knocks and undergone trying experiences, but survived them all without losing a perennial smile, or faith in himself or mankind.

In his limited schooling geography engrossed him, and he left his home in Ohio at a tender age, determined to see the western country. He was but fifteen when he reached Dawson. This was in 1900, two years after the Klondyke rush, and he had previously earned wages in the Cœur d'Alene mines in Idaho.

A man-sized boy, he held his own with fellow gold-diggers without falling victim to dance-hall iniquities, and, developing and conserving the strength and talents God had given him, he acquired a love of the Northland which proved abiding.

He made two trips the length of the Yukon before he was twenty; thrived as a newsboy in Fairbanks' boom days when papers sold at twenty-five

cents each, and worked in the placer creeks thereabout; staked claims in the Chandalar, far north, and at M'Grath, Ophir and Iditarod; pursued the vocation of trader at these and other camps; established supply bases on the Kuskokwim, at Bethel and Akiak; carried the mail to Nushkagak and Koyukuk; had done business in the Kotzebue Sound country; lived among the Esquimaux; mushed over the vast interior with dog teams, and sailed the rivers and sea coasts.

Mark Field knew Alaska and Alaska knew Mark Field. From Ketchikan to Nome and Point Barrow, from Tenakee to Yakataga and Chuginidak, this unsoured sourdough was known and personally esteemed.

Now entrusted semi-officially with the task of tracing Lyle Blake, he did not proceed by asking questions in whispers and looking mysterious, but moved among friends and acquaintances and absorbed information. A visitor to this lonesome land is not forgotten when gone, and a visitation from the vivacious little teacher was sure to be talked about for days to come. He found it so. She charmed all who came in contact with her, and Mark Field at once began to hear her praises sounded and, with an occasional interrogatory remark, casually made, obtain intimate knowledge of her movements, sayings and doings. It was an easy task for one so unusually equipped.

A fund was available from which to meet the expenses of searching parties organized to rescue people lost in the wilds. Frequently it was utilized to find and bring in prospectors who had fallen ill or otherwise become disabled on unfrequented islands or in the mountains. But the Governor did not draw upon this fund in sending Field to trace Lyle Blake.

Unless she boarded the Selkirk and made the river voyage, as she clearly meant to do—proof of which was lacking—what had become of her?

Could she have left the steamer at a landing on the way—possibly at Hootalinque, Hutchiku, Selkirk or Ogilvie?

If she reached Dawson, why did she not claim her trunk?

Might she suddenly have changed her plans and joined a party and gone from Dawson overland to see the new silver camp at Mayo, intending to return shortly, but been unavoidably delayed?

All these possibilities ran through Mark Field's active and resourceful mind at Dawson when unable to discover anyone who had traveled with or seen her. He was troubled that he could send no definite word to Juneau. His investigation from Whitehorse to Dawson had disclosed a blank. The locating of the trunk only deepened the mystery. She had dropped completely out of sight. Like the Governor, he was positive she had come to no harm and that the efforts to trace her were merely baffled by a strange combination of untoward circumstances. Knowing the frontier people, he was convinced that, wherever she might be, she was in safe, kindly hands and that, at any moment now, from some quarter, would surely come the good news that she was alive and perfectly well. While he, unhappily, was denied the pleasure of meeting the girl during her stay at the capital, as he then was over at Sitka, he really knew her from the information given him and gleaned, and he had the utmost confidence in her ability and resourcefulness to take care of herself in any emergency.

In a dilemma as to the next step to take, he made inquiry among rivermen for Wes Litchfield. But, if

he had come down the river, they had not seen him. Usually, they said, he stopped at Dawson, where he was at home, although his visits in recent years had been few and far between.

Naturally the young mining engineer, Wayne Roberts, figured in the preplexing immediate equation, and Field wondered whether she had not, at Roberts' invitation, hastily decided to make a side trip across the border to Mayo. He was almost moved to telegraph to Roberts, but, on second thought, abandoned the idea. He was unknown to the young engineer and such an inquiry would be resented, if she were there, or be misunderstood and start gossip, in any case. There was no valid reason whatever to connect Roberts with her disappearance.

Too practical to prolong unprofitable speculation, a man of action, Mark Field at once decided to go on down the river to Eagle and see the miner's wife, Jane Carmody. She would know whether Lyle Blake journeyed from Whitehorse to Dawson, or intermediate point, as they had been assigned to the same state-room. Indeed, she seemed the one person who could furnish reliable information. If they had been traveling companions, she would naturally know of any changed plans on the girl's part; if they had not, then Field's duty clearly was to hasten back up the Yukon toward Whitehorse and pursue his investigation in that region. It might lead into the White River country, where hunting expeditions from the "outside" often went in quest of big game. In such contingency he knew guides who could be of service.

He was fortunate to find a gas boat loading freight for Eagle and easily persuaded the master to carry him as a passenger. They set out down the river within an hour after Field filed his message to

the Governor, saying that Lyle's trunk was unclaimed and in storage at Dawson and that he was going on to Eagle—the message that so crushed the girl's mother and non-plussed the Governor, to whom the trip to Eagle appeared foolish.

Jane Carmody had been outside to purchase supplies, and these were included in the gas boat's cargo, addressed to Dan Carmody, Jane's husband. The shipment had been delayed and was now going forward as fast freight, assuming that anything can be fast on the Yukon.

Field learned from the master that the Carmody mining camp was westward from Eagle some thirty miles, and that Dan or Jane Carmody would likely be waiting the boat's arrival. He hoped it would be Jane.

Reaching Eagle the morning of the second day, neither of the Carmodys was at the lonesome dock, but the storekeeper said that one of them, or the foreman, would be in, he thought, during the forenoon. They were in need of supplies and knew the probable time of the boat's arrival.

Field had heard of Dan Carmody as a frontiersman who had been mining about Eagle and Forty Mile for fifteen years, after accumulating some money at Dawson. He was a hard-working character, and his wife an industrious help-mate. She was credited with possessing the managerial ability of the family.

From the custodian and caretaker of the abandoned military post, Ft. Egbert, which enlivened Eagle in the years following the Klondyke rush, but had long since been out of use, Field learned more about the Carmodys. Dan, thirty-odd years ago, was active in local politics in a coal mining center of Ohio and was elected city clerk and made a happy

marriage while holding that office. Then he was nominated for Mayor and was supposed to be a sure winner, but an unexpected turn in the campaign, due to the over-zealousness of a labor union to which he belonged, cost him his personal and political popularity and the election. Discredited and broke, he and his plucky wife determined to start life anew in a new country, and sold their home, paid off his debts and came to Alaska, or rather to Dawson in the Yukon Territory. There he resumed the manual labor he quitted upon entering political life. Wages were high and his wife, who was well educated, added to their earnings by teaching and sewing. A son and daughter, Jack and Jean, came to bless them.

In the course of a few years their savings amounted to several thousand dollars, and Dan staked one claim after another across the border on American soil and made some promising strikes, but none of them at once rich or productive enough to hold. One he unfortunately sold just before a vein was reached which yielded the new owner a small fortune. Dan's original ambition was to amass $50,000 and return to the States to give his children the benefits of good schooling and Jane the comforts and pleasures her industry had earned in the wilds.

"But," said the caretaker, "he has encountered ill-luck and his capital has generally been so tied up that he could not cash in and get away. Now he has come to love this life and has lost his desire to go 'out.' His wife has made three trips to Seattle, and this time she put Jack, who is nineteen, and Jean, seventeen, in school there. She has reared them carefully and they will make their mark.

"Dan is a philosopher and insists that the world has treated him well, after all; but if you want to start him off on a tangent just mention politics or

labor unionism. He despises both and declares there is no fair-play or honesty in either. He is for the Government and did his bit for the Red Cross and in buying Liberty bonds during the war, but declares that political parties and labor organizations are of the devil's making and never to be trusted. He argues that when statesmen rise it is in spite of parties, and that labor unions are the bane of the working classes. Yet he is not soured or dyspeptic, but cheery and buoyant and full of passionate devotion to his country. He threshed a man at Forty Mile until he called for mercy because of a disparaging allusion to the flag.

"His experience in politics accounts for his aversions. He pays his taxes without a murmur and will employ no man who cannot show his school tax receipt, but sneers at Territorial campaigns and boasts that the only vote he ever cast since coming North was to make Alaska 'dry.' "

All these things Mark Field heard from the caretaker while looking over the well-kept, but decaying, government property, once Ft. Egbert, in the interim of waiting for Dan or Jane Carmody to come after the supplies on the dock at Eagle.

Jane came at two o'clock, driving a pair of horses attached to a buckboard. She was in khaki garb, covered with dust, but apparently unfatigued. All business, she proceeded immediately to check the boxes and barrels brought by the gas boat and directed their placing on the vehicle.

Field introduced himself and lent a hand.

"You are not starting back at once?" he remarked.

"I'd like to be on the way," she said, "but the horses must rest and be fed. It is a rough trip. We made it in four hours coming, but with this load it

will require six, at least, returning. Barring a spill, we should be in camp at ten o'clock, leaving at four.

"Did you enjoy your trip 'outside'?" asked Field.

"Only in part," she answered. "Going it was splendid, for I had my children with me, but it tore my heart to leave them and the return trip was monotonously long and tedious. These supplies did not make connection at Skagway or Whitehorse and were held up at Dawson. Another fortnight and we should have been short of food other than game, and a prolonged diet of that sort, you know, spoils one's appetite. Happily, starvation never stares Alaska in the face."

Mark Field knew and testified to the fact in sourdough fashion. But uppermost in his mind was the subject of his mission.

"The Selkirk was crowded, I understand?"

"Overcrowded, indeed. It was taxed and congested to the limit and we were half way to Dawson before we fairly got our bearings. There was a constant shifting about the first night and the passenger list was so awry that I doubt whether it was ever actually counted. But we are thankful for small favors on the river these days and do not mind trifling hardships."

"You met Miss Blake—Lyle Blake, the young teacher, who was going to Fairbanks?"

"No; she was not aboard. Some one told me about her at Skagway and I expected to see her, but she must have taken an earlier boat or waited for a later one. She was wise."

Jane Carmody was in ignorance of the fact, evidently, that she and Lyle had originally been assigned to the same state-room.

For the first time really at his wits' end, Mark Field fretted over the inevitable delay ahead of him.

He was compelled to wait three days before the gas boat started back to Dawson and three days more were required to reach there.

Meanwhile, in the absence of any tidings, the Governor was impatient. Why Field had gone on down the river continued to puzzle him. Unexplained, the trip seemed a waste of precious time. But he suspended judgment pending a further report, and his confidence in Field was unimpaired.

Mrs. Blake would have gone to Skagway and Whitehorse, as she contemplated, and, on her own part, instituted a search, but waited in expectation of good news at any hour and was finally dissuaded from making the trip. The convincing argument against it was that she would be out of reach, unacquainted with the people and unfamiliar with the country and could only cover the ground already so thoroughly covered by Field.

Whether the trunk should be claimed, upon a certificate from the Governor, and shipped to Juneau, or be allowed to remain in storage in the hope that the girl might yet call for it, was a difficult question to decide. At first the distressed mother favored sending for it immediately, but reconsidered and thought it better to wait.

Although assured that she would be notified promptly when news came, whether good or bad, she telephoned anxiously each evening. Her daily life was secluded, except for visits from the Governor's wife and daughter at the Zynda. Often she begged them to stay longer. She asked to be excused from coming to the Mansion, as she would meet people and she shunned making acquaintances.

She did not give or invite confidences and was plainly reluctant to discuss her family history, except as to Lyle, of whose devotion and courage and

achievements in school she loved to talk; and she heard over and over with unflagging interest little details and incidents of the girl's stay in Juneau.

"What did she say?" she would ask to have the saying repeated, and linger upon the words. It solaced her for the moment, but she would rouse and exclaim: "I must find her!" Again and again she would clasp the Governor's daughter and say sadly: "If I only had mine."

Two weeks elapsed before Mark Field was heard from. A letter posted at Whitehorse told of his trip to Eagle to see Jane Carmody, of the delay in getting back to Dawson and the four days consumed on his return journey up the river. He wrote that while he accepted Mrs. Carmody's statement that Lyle Blake was not a fellow passenger on the Selkirk, and the unclaimed trunk offered corroborative proof, he had sought another interview with the purser of the steamer and been permitted to scan the passenger lists. There were many erasures and alterations on these. Finally he found Lyle's name, with a room number set opposite, but it had been stricken. The purser, as he said before, recalled the girl's coming aboard the steamer in the forenoon and his advising her to remain at the hotel until near sailing time, but he could not remember the circumstance of the cancellation of her passage. There was such confusion and so many exchanges of berths to meet the whims of travelers that it was impossible to keep check upon everything. He "supposed" that her failure to claim her reservation had cancelled it automatically. Unsatisfactory as it was, Field could obtain no additional information. However, he did succeed in locating two other passengers who were quite sure there was no Miss Blake aboard

the crowded vessel, and thus confirmed Jane Carmody.

The report, though posted at Whitehorse, was written at Dawson. He had brought it with him to catch the White Pass mail to the South.

A postscript said:

> "I shall scour the region hereabout. Since she did not go down the river, she cannot be far away. Hunting parties are in the White River Valley and she may have joined one of them for adventure and been delayed."

This seemed possible. Mrs. Blake grasped at the theory or suggestion. Lyle was so fond of the outdoors, she said, that such an expedition would appeal to her strongly. But what became of the letters she had surely written? She would not go upon such an adventure without making the fact known.

By the mail that brought Mark Field's report came a letter to the Governor, marked personal, sent from Mayo, Y. T., via Dawson. It read:

> "My Dear Sir:
>
> "I am venturing to make inquiry of you regarding Miss Lyle Blake. It was my pleasure to travel with her on the Spokane from Juneau to Skagway and she spoke of the many courtesies shown her by your family. My work is about finished here and I had planned to go out by way of Fairbanks and the government railroad in order to pay her a visit. She said she would be expecting me. But a telegram I sent to her at Fairbanks is reported undelivered and my letters are unanswered. Do you happen to know her address? If so, and you will kindly wire it to me at Dawson, I shall be very grateful. Frankly, I should be deeply disappointed to return East without seeing her as promised.
>
> "Thanking you in anticipation of an early response, I am,
>
> "Respectfully yours,
>
> "Wayne Roberts."

The Governor deemed it unnecessary to show this letter to the mother, but answered it by wire without delay in these words:

> "Regret do not know her present address. Am making inquiry. She did not go to Dawson or Fairbanks."

Roberts' frank and manly letter summarily disposed of any lingering thought, not to say suspicion, that he was in any way connected with her strange disappearance, or that she might suddenly have changed her itinerary and gone to Mayo at his invitation to see the new mining camp. That he had acquired more than a passing interest in his charming fellow-traveler was now decidedly clear.

As there was small likelihood of reaching him by mail, the telegram was not supplemented by letter telling him that she was unaccountably missing. He would undoubtedly learn in quick season, the Governor observed, and he further hazarded the opinion that the East would wait upon Wayne Roberts until Lyle Blake was found and the mystery solved.

The school season was close at hand and there was no surprise two days hence when a message from Fairbanks said that Miss Blake had not reported for duty and requested that a substitute teacher be sent at once. One was fortunately secured at Douglas and went by the steamer Alameda to Seward and thence to the metropolis of the interior by rail. This expeditious route enabled her to arrive in ample time. Lyle's non-appearance was ascribed at Fairbanks to woman's prerogative to change her mind.

Mrs. Blake became remarkably composed as the days went on. She continued studiously to avoid people, but on clear days took long walks, usually

unaccompanied. A lover of nature, she sought comfort in communing with the trees and mountains and following the lonesome but enticing trails. She gathered flowers and blueberries, and from elevated spots watched the steamers and fishing craft moving in and out of the harbor. The sunsets on the Chilkats enchanted her. She had the eyes of an artist and longed for the skill to paint the glories of Alaskan skies.

Her favorite strolls were over the basin road and out on the highway to Salmon Creek, whither Lyle had hiked so merrily during her fleeting stay.

On several occasions the Governor's daughter joined her on her jaunts, and they set one another a lively pace. One evening, early in September, they espied on the mountain-side a pretty, two-room cottage, unoccupied and for rent. Its view embraced the channel and the peaks miles away to the South and North.

"It is for me!" exclaimed Mrs. Blake, with an enthusiasm previously unknown in her.

As she visualized the environment, her reserve disappeared and she became as animated as Lyle. The resemblance was momentarily striking.

They stood on the steps of the cottage and peered in the small windows and walked about the grounds.

"Yes, it is mine," she repeated, "and just the domicile I have been looking for. What joy I shall have in furnishing it! I'll rent it tomorrow and move in my few belongings. If I can be content anywhere, it is on this mountain-side. I shall be waiting for her here and she will come to me."

In her elation she embraced her young companion, who shared her enthusiasm, and they lingered in the twilight and dreamed dreams of this cottage home and happiness to come.

CHAPTER VI.

A BELATED AND PUZZLING MESSAGE

A BUDGET of mail was brought to the Mansion one evening early in September when the American liner Northwestern, from the westward, and the Canadian steamer Princess Mary, from the South, put into port simultaneously.

Always there were many personal letters for members of the Governor's family, and the number on this occasion was exceptionally large. The daughter was especially favored, and her missives were placed on her dresser, awaiting her return from the Saturday night dance regularly given for the entertainment of tourists arriving on the Princess.

Mrs. Blake had come to make her daily inquiry and, disappointed, gone sadly on to her scenic cottage on the mountain-side. As usual, the Governor urged her to keep up her courage, assuring her that Lyle was certainly safe and would be located shortly.

The Governor was leaving in a few days for Cordova, Valdez and Seward, and then to make an inspection of the government railroad to the end of steel. He would be absent from the Capitol two weeks or more. A reservation had been made for him on the Admiral Watson, and with close connection and a speedy trip by rail he might catch the same steamer on her return from Kodiak, but this was problematical, as she sometimes proceeded only to Anchorage and returned directly. He understood the uncertainties of steamers during the rush season. On coming from the trail, the month before, he had cut short his stay at Kennicott and M'Carthy and hastened to Cordova and there waited six days for a

steamer which was expected the next day. He was accustomed to delays incident to travel in Alaska.

The fact that he would be out of touch for at least a fortnight while the search for Lyle Blake was going on was especially disturbing. It had been conducted under his personal direction to date and he was reluctant to be away. The best he could do was to look ahead and anticipate possible emergencies.

They talked it all over, the Governor and wife, for an hour and more, repeatedly expressing their sympathy for the distracted mother.

"It is so mystifying," he said, "that I do not know what to think. I still believe her safe and unharmed, but where is she and why her silence?"

His wife, equally puzzled and troubled, bravely insisted that good news would come soon.

They had retired when the little daughter, duly chaperoned, came home from the dance and, as she went to her room, she called to them a cheery "goodnight" and said she had had a delightful evening.

Half an hour later the entire household was aroused by the daughter shouting:

"Mammie! Daddie! See what is in my mail! A postal card from Lyle Blake! Isn't it splendid? Her mother must see it this very night."

They could hardly comprehend what she was saying, but rose at once and lights were turned on, as the daughter danced about gleefully, holding the card aloft and exclaiming: "Good news! Good news! She is safe and well."

The Governor hurriedly glanced at the undated few words, written on the card, which read:

> "Am having a wonderful trip. How are you all? This is a queer little place. Ft. Gibbon is interesting. Wish you were with me. Eager for letters at Fairbanks. Dearest love. "LYLE."

Tanana! Where the Tanana River empties into the Yukon and the little steamers not destined for lower Yukon points turn from the bigger stream into the smaller one and go up the Tanana to Nenana and connect with the railroad to Fairbanks.

Both the Governor and wife had been there and knew. He, scanning the card, was puzzled and unrelieved. Noting his frown, she asked:

"What is the date?"

"It is a month old," he answered, "and postmarked ten days after she left Whitehorse. She did not record the date."

"But she was on her way to Fairbanks," said the daughter.

"Yes; but she has not reached there and where is she now?"

They studied the message in turn. It was written on the face of the card in the margin to the left, and the reverse side bore a faded picture of the headquarters building at Ft. Gibbon.

The post mark was distinct. A full month and a day had been consumed in its transit from Tanana to Juneau.

Having acquired knowledge of the mail service in recommending new routes, the Governor quickly accounted for the delay. The mail probably did not leave Tanana immediately; then went by easy river stages to Nenana; thence by rail to the end of steel; was carried over the almost impassable gap between steel; further delayed waiting for a train on the southern division, and missed steamer connection at Anchorage and Seward. He could understand perfectly.

"But she is safe," persisted the daughter.

"Yes; but where is she?"

The telegram of two days before said she had not reported at Fairbanks.

It was past midnight, yet wife and daughter thought it urgent to inform Mrs. Blake at once, and he readily agreed. He dressed and went in person, the daughter, still in dancing apparel, accompanying him. It was not a long walk.

On the way she told him how she had looked over the mail hurriedly, read two or three short letters, and was putting the packet aside when she espied the picture of Ft. Gibbon and wondered who was writing to her from there. Turning it over, she found it was from Lyle. Otherwise it would have been unread until the morrow or later, as she was not invariably punctual in attending to her correspondence.

It was a clear night and as they climbed a steep flight of steps they paused at intervals for breath and to look at the moon-lit channel and mountains.

Reaching the cottage, he rapped on the door and the daughter called out:

"Mrs. Blake! Mrs. Blake! There is good news."

Recognizing the voice, the mother immediately opened the door. She had been keeping lonely vigil at the window, looking out into the night. Dawn still comes at an early hour at this season in Northern latitude, and her anxious countenance could easily be seen before she turned on the light.

She greeted her callers calmly, without emotion, but with eager questioning in her eyes.

"Here is a message from Lyle," said the daughter, handing her the card. "It came in the mail tonight. She is all right."

The mother read and re-read the few words, unmoved, and studied the post mark. A smile slowly appeared which bespoke the relief she felt.

"Where is Tanana?" she asked, "and why was she there?"

The Governor told her Tanana was on the river route to Fairbanks, and he explained the poor mail service which accounted for the belated coming of the card.

Instantly she grasped the disquieting fact that in the month elapsing Lyle had not reached her destination and reported for school duty. She could not understand it.

Inquiring in detail about the exact location of Tanana and learning that going down the river the boat stops at Dawson and reaches Tanana, if on schedule, four days later, it was inconceivable to her why her child had left her trunk at Dawson.

Like the Governor, practical-minded, she was relieved, yet unrelieved. The month's blank was inexplicable; likewise the fact of her unclaimed trunk, her failing to reach Fairbanks and the non-receipt of letters she had undoubtedly written at Whitehorse and beyond.

But there was consolation in the knowledge that a month ago, far off in the interior, Lyle was her happy self, "having a wonderful trip," and it brightened the mother and gave her added confidence in the Governor's assurance that more definite word was now sure to be received very soon and everything happily cleared up.

"Sleep in peace," he urged her. "We know she is alive and well."

"I shall," she answered, and she expressed her thanks again and again to the Governor and daughter for coming to her so promptly at so late an hour.

Looking backward, in descending the steps, they saw her at the window intently reading the postcard.

The night was gone when they finished talking about Lyle and her mother and the mystifying phases of the strange case after their return to the Mansion.

The Governor next morning sent a telegram to Mark Field at Whitehorse, apprising him that the girl had written from Tanana. Whether it would be delivered at once was uncertain. Field might have gone scouring the White River country.

Originally perplexed by the then inexplicable trip to Eagle, the Governor now regretted that Field did not go on down the river, and half-doubted the seemingly conclusive proof given by the purser, Jane Carmody and others that Lyle Blake was not a passenger on the Selkirk. How could she have reached Tanana without stopping at Dawson and transferring to another steamer? Each succeeding theory he evolved was negatived by the fact of the unclaimed trunk. She alone could explain it. Her month-old post-card explained nothing.

Mrs. Blake had become composed and singularly calm.

When it was suggested to her that another inquiry be wired to Fairbanks she dissented. It was unnecessary. When Lyle arrived and found a substitute teacher installed in her place, she would write or telegraph, of course. Fairbanks was not cut off from communication. Manifestly, she was not there now. The Mayor or the school superintendent, knowing the Governor's interest, would communicate with him immediately. It was inadvisable to risk bringing her daughter into embarrassing notoriety.

The mother had been in Alaska long enough to learn how small communities were prone to become wrought up and unduly excited. Even cosmopolitan little Juneau, she remarked, was not an exception.

She related how, in making some purchases, she

overheard two ladies, who did not know her by sight, speculating why she lived all alone in such a lonely spot and whether, as "they say," she was a relation of the Governor's. She laughed as she told the incident and very seriously expressed the hope that the fine friendship given her in sore need would not serve to annoy her benefactors.

"Never," said the Governor's wife, with spirit. "We have done nothing those two ladies themselves, whoever they are, would not as willingly and freely have done. We shall be proud to have them know you. Some day you will know and love these folk as we do."

"I am sure of it," she answered; "doubly sure because of the uniform kindness and courtesy extended to Lyle. She wrote of it in detail in one of her long letters, bless her heart! Why, I understand so well that I did not, in the slightest, resent the talk I overheard. I lived in a small town in my girlhood and never in a large city. People are alike the world over; the difference is relative. In this beautiful, far-away land, I truly believe, with you, that they are more warm-hearted than the average. I shall know them when Lyle comes back to me. Until then, it would kill me to have her dear name on every tongue. I have borne much, but could not bear that."

Then she said, as she had so often said before, that never for an instant did she doubt that her daughter had written to her regularly. She would not fail in any emergency.

"What has become of her letters is the mystery of mysteries. I feel assured she is safe, but this silence is baffling and beyond comprehension. She is in ignorance of my anxiety; does not know I have followed her out here. A letter coming to me at home would be forwarded. None has come. I telegraphed

twice to make certain. She was eager, as you see, to reach Fairbanks to get my letters. Traveling constantly, she could not hear from me, but what must be her anxiety after all these weeks? I know that my letters waiting for her at Fairbanks are undelivered, but any day, I tell myself, she will call for them and, therefore, I continue writing to her daily. I shall hear soon. Something tells me so."

Mark Field, acknowledging receipt of the message that Lyle Blake had been at Tanana a month ago, wired that a report was on the way and he would await orders. He had just returned to Whitehorse after a week's trip to river points and mining camps. The Governor dictated a letter, acquainting him with every new phase of the case known here, and directing him to proceed down the river to Tanana, where further instructions would be waiting him, and indicated that he would likely see him at Nenana.

With only three days now remaining until he embarked upon the Alameda to cross the gulf of Alaska to Cordova, Valdez and Seward, the southern terminus of the government railroad, the Governor was very busy indeed. He was engrossed in a session of the banking board, an exception to those functioning with difficulty, when a card inscribed, "Mr. Wayne Roberts, Denver, Col." was brought to the desk. He had arrived in the early morning on the return voyage of the Admiral Rogers and was in the ante-room desirous of an audience.

The Governor interrupted the session momentarily to go out and speak to him.

Unabashed, the young man, after a cordial handshake, without waste of words, said he wished to make an appointment, when convenient, for a per-

sonal talk. He was stopping at the Gastineau and his stay indefinite.

The Governor understood and suggested that he come at twelve-thirty and go with him to the house for luncheon. Roberts assented and accepted with thanks, asking pardon for having called inopportunely.

Full six feet in height, smooth of face, quietly dressed, college-bred, he was a decidedly handsome young man, who would attract attention in any company. He was tanned from his trip over the trail to and from Mayo and his work in the mines.

Glancing out of the window, the Governor noted his military stride as he went down the street. It bore testimony to his army training acquired in service in the world war. Juneau would be quite interested in this young man, thought the Governor, as he resumed the interrupted board proceedings.

At luncheon, two hours later, he bore himself modestly, but with confidence, and told in a most interesting way about the industrial development at Mayo. He gave no opinion as to the extent of the silver beds, but emphasized the richness of the product and said that the difficulties of operation were gradually being overcome. The transportation problem was the hardest to solve.

"You like life in the wilds?" said the Governor's wife.

"When there is real work to do, I like nothing better," he answered. "It is well worth while to find use for capital and see the earth yield forth its treasures. Employment of capital means employment of men. A mining camp quickly grows into a town or little city. Only a short while since Mayo was unheard-of—a barren, inaccessible spot, unpromising in every aspect. Today it is a center of humming

industry. It is inspiring to witness such a transformation. But the reverse phase too often follows. A worked-out or abandoned mine is pathetic in the extreme. It distresses me to look down your channel toward Thane and think of the lost millions and the once happy villagers now scattered to the four corners of the earth. Master minds are today engaged in devising improved systems of mining which will lower costs and safeguard capital against such failures. Machinery called modern today may be antiquated tomorrow. In all history there was never before such scientific progress."

He did not intimate that his was one of the master minds, but assumed that the Governor's family knew little or nothing about any prestige or achievement on his part.

On topics touching mining he was an enthusiast and talked readily and well. He was equally interested in problems of the fisheries and forests, and listened with zest to the Governor's optimistic talk about the resources and possibilities of the Territory. It developed in the table conversation that the young man had left college an ultra-conservationist of the advanced, theoretical school, but had changed his views upon studying conditions in new and unopened countries. He was now a practical conservationist, who would see the resources used for the public good. Hoarding was not conservation.

"But you would be termed a prejudiced witness," remarked the Governor, "with your connection with a group of big capitalists."

"True enough," he rejoined, "yet I am just as free-handed and open-minded as when I left college. Knowledge and practical experience on the frontier —in the mountains of Colorado, in Nevada, British Columbia and now in the Yukon Territory—have

given me a better understanding. The thought that capital, once it hazards an investment in a new land, becomes a selfish interest and forthwith forfeits its right to a hearing or an opinion, is untenable and destructive. Business and industry require regulation, not only in the public welfare, but in the interest of business and industry. It is as indispensable to one side as the other. But equitable and proper regulation is not secured through popular outcry and insensate prejudice. Put capital out of commission and there would be nothing left to regulate. It would Russianize the country."

He checked himself suddenly and apologized for talking so much and giving vent to views which he felt were too obvious for discussion.

Asking about the administrative system and learning that thirty-odd bureaus took a hand in running the Territory, he laughingly observed that such a system would spell bankruptcy to a private business or industry. It could not escape being inefficient and wasteful and it explained why the country was going ahead so slowly, if not being held back.

There had been but one reference to Lyle Blake thus far. Upon meeting the daughter of the Mansion he greeted her cordially and said: "Miss Blake sounded your praises to me."

Leaving the table, the Governor and the young man retired to the study to have "a personal talk" over their cigars. It was prolonged and became decidedly personal.

"Your courteous response to my letter of inquiry," said Roberts, opening the conversation and coming directly to the point, "prompts me to come to you on this purely personal errand. You will not misunderstand when I repeat what I said in my letter that I

should be deeply disappointed to return East without seeing her."

The Governor nodded understandingly.

"You have not learned her whereabouts?"

"Her present whereabouts, unhappily, no. She was at Tanana a month ago." And the Governor told of the belated post-card received by his daughter.

"At Tanana!" said Roberts in surprise. "On her way to Fairbanks, yet did not reach there."

It was evident he was acquainted with the geography of the interior.

"You know definitely she is not now there?" asked the Governor.

"My undelivered telegram and unanswered letters," said he, "furnished proof sufficient, and it was confirmed only yesterday. A business associate of mine was going to the Kantishna district to examine a mine and I requested him to call on her at Fairbanks and present my compliments. In wiring me at Dawson on another matter he added that he had gone by rail sixty miles from Nenana especially to fulfill my mission and found she had not come. His wire overtook me at Skagway."

Thereupon the Governor narrated all the incidents and events to date—the coming of Lyle's mother; the dispatching of Mark Field in search of the girl; his circumstantial report of her doings at Skagway and Whitehorse; the finding of her unclaimed trunk at Dawson; the statements of the purser, Jane Carmody and others that she had not been a passenger on the crowded steamer Selkirk, and the growing apprehension, which was relieved somewhat, but not wholly removed, by her delayed message from Tanana, saying she was "having a wonderful trip" and was "eager for letters at Fairbanks."

The narrative did not omit mention of the impromptu concert at the little hotel at Whitehorse when Wes Litchfield, the Sourdough, was so charmed by the girl's piano-playing, and their subsequent chatter and his accompanying her, next evening, carrying her suitcase, when she started for the steamer.

Tactfully, the Governor refrained from making any reference to the fact that young Roberts' attention to his fair fellow-traveler up the Lynn Canal and their parting at Skagway, as reported by the Marshal, had been duly weighed as having a possible bearing upon her disappearance, and his identity carefully looked into.

Roberts listened attentively, asking questions occasionally as he analyzed and commented upon the detailed presentation.

"I met and talked with Field," he said, "coming from Dawson. He took passage at Five Finger Rapids and we fraternized on the boat one night for an hour. Not a hint did he give me of his search, but I recall now that he drew out of me much of my life's story. I remember, too, his casually asking a river man at Hootalinqua whether Wes Litchfield had yet gone down the river. The unusual name fixed the incident in my mind. Field is alert and dependable, I judge. He is a gentleman."

As with the Governor, theory after theory suggested itself to Wayne Roberts, only to be demolished by the unclaimed trunk. He was clear-headed and quick to brush inconsequentials aside. How she reached Tanana was now, he said, of no immediate moment. The important fact was that she was there a month ago, and the logical deduction that she was still in that vicinity or farther down the river. Time had been lost looking for her up the river, but Field

was not to be blamed for this. He—Roberts—should have followed a like course with the information then at hand.

"Locate Wes Litchfield and you will find Miss Blake," said he, decisively. "That is my best judgment, and I am convinced no harm has come to her."

Then in a frank, manly way that was most appealing he acknowledged to the Governor his love of the girl. He did not dare hope that, upon such a brief and transient acquaintance, his love was returned, but he did hope he might prove his worth and win her affection. He had not, of course, ventured to express to her the sentiment in his heart, but she perhaps had guessed and given him permission to write and promised to write to him. She seemed pleased when he told her he would see her at Fairbanks before he returned East, and said she should be looking for him. It was no mere passing fancy on his part. He had known and admired many girls, but had never met one so bright, attractive and lovable as Lyle Blake. Every moment since they parted he had longed for her. He had written her letter after letter and hastened the completion of his investigation at Mayo, that he might the sooner see her. Now he intended to complete and forward his report and stay in Alaska until she was found. He had no doubt she would soon be found. Then, if she reciprocated his love, he would take her East with him as his wife and be the happiest man in all America. In proof of his deep feeling he had written his mother in Connecticut of the sweet girl who had come into his life in this strange country.

He was quietly eloquent in disclosing his dreams and hopes to the Governor, and it transformed him from the reserved young man of the world into an

impulsive and determined youth or boy. His genuineness was unmistakable.

Having thus bared his heart, instantly his reserve and poise returned, and he said suddenly:

"Have you any objection to my going westward and into the interior with you?"

"None whatever," said the Governor. "It will please me."

The personal talk consumed more than an hour in the cloister of the study, which was thick with smoke.

As they emerged, wife and daughter came from the drawing-room and the young man gallantly took his leave.

Outside he asked the Governor to direct him to Mrs. Blake's cottage on the mountain-side. It was his desire and he felt it his duty to see and talk with her, and he wished a glimpse of the dear girl's postcard from Tanana.

Two nights later the Governor sailed on the Alameda and Wayne Roberts was aboard.

CHAPTER VII.

MR. SOURDOUGH, PAST AND PRESENT

PURSUING his quest of the missing teacher, Mark Field incidentally acquired the fullest possible information concerning the life and habits of Wes Litchfield, in whose company she was last seen at Whitehorse. Originally rejecting the theory that the old man was connected with her disappearance, there was now no other clue to work upon, and it was given plausability by the fact that he, too, had dropped out of sight as completely and mysteriously as she.

Field had met him once, years ago, in the Chandalar country, prospecting, and found him a generous, kindly worker, well-liked and trusted by fellow-miners. He recalled a pleasant two hours playing pinochle with him one night at a road-house up there and his dry humor as he cleverly followed the cards and won game after game with ease. A looker-on, impressed with his skill, spoke of having seen him dealing faro at Dawson years before, with blue chips stacked high, and said he regretted the passing of those 'good old days," whereupon Litchfield remarked that they were "better gone" and added that it was "folly to play for money," and he had long ago quit cards except for pastime.

This episode came back to Field in considering and appraising Litchfield's reputation. Acquaintances commonly called him "a square gambler," having in mind those "good old days" and giving no thought to his steady-going course in normal times following. The role thus stamped upon endured, pisturesque and interesting, and he could not shake

it off and escape it, if he would. Evidently he had not cared; possibly he enjoyed the unique distinction it gave him.

At a carnival at Dawson, at which the scenes of 1898 were reproduced, not long since, he had renewed and revived the role by presiding at an imitation gaming table and dealing the cards. "Phony" money was used and betting ran high. He conducted the game literally according to Hoyle, smiling upon his patrons and looking the part of the cool gamester who could take his winnings and losses with equal composure, and giving a striking realism to the replica. Innocent enough and for sweet charity's sake, and under the patronage of the best people of the town, it nevertheless served to re-create Wes Litchfield in a familiar guise which could not be lived down.

On the river steamer recently, coming to Dawson, in talking about Litchfield, a man who professed to know him well, said that, while conceding the good qualities ascribed to him, he had always mentally reserved his opinion of this erstwhile "square gambler." In his philosophy there was "no such animal." He had been about the world and was convinced that any one of the ilk, Litchfield not excepted, would turn a sharp trick, if need be. The fact that he had never been caught only attested his cleverness. In a broader sphere, this man reasoned, in the populated East, with faro, keno and roulette under the ban, Litchfield probably would be promoting fake prize fights and, Barnum-like, waxing rich upon the credulity of mankind.

Agreeing that this might hold true as to the average gambler, Field dissented as to Litchfield and cited the fact that it could not be set down against him that he ever floated mining stocks of inflated

value, if not worthless, as had been the custom of some of his tribe to the injury of legitimate Alaskan industry.

"He has not reformed, but merely changed with the changing times," the man contended, and Field did not continue the conversation.

In those "good old days" Litchfield had worn a full beard which gave him a forbidding appearance suggestive of the dare-devil or ready gunman, although he was a man of peace. His hirsute growth concealed a most benign countenance. Now clean-shaven, soft-spoken and mild of manner, he could more easily be mistaken for a preacher or merchant. His word was good and he was never known to have wronged a fellow being unless, perhaps, in a game of chance, when he invariably won. Age had softened him. He possessed a sunny, buoyant nature, and all along the Yukon he was known as a man who asked no odds of his fellows and kept his head well above water in fair weather or foul.

In the company of women, which rarely happened, he was the soul of affability and plainly held the gentler sex in high respect. On occasions he would disclose the finest sentiment. Nobody knew his early history. He would not talk about himself and seldom wrote or received letters. For months he would not be seen or heard from. Then, unannounced, he would appear at Fairbanks, Dawson or Whitehorse, or, at longer intervals at St. Michael, and greet friends casually, as if he had been there only the day before. On such visitations he usually sent a remittance East through a bank or the post-office.

During the open season he lived largely on his gas boat, cruising up and down the Yukon and its tributaries, trading with the natives, fishing and

hunting and prospecting in a desultory way on the side. A small interest in a claim near Ruby was said to have yielded him a snug reward. His permanent habitat, if he had any, was supposed to be somewhere on the Kuskokwim.

All the facts gleaned by Mark Field were, in the main, creditable to Litchfield. In the days of the Arctic Brotherhood, he was a moving spirit in the organization and was still classified as a pioneer, if not identified with an Igloo of the Order of Pioneers. Unlike many of his confreres of those wild, unrestrained times, he had not succumbed to drink, being a teetotaler, or wasted his substance. He was too farsighted to risk becoming an inmate of the Home at Sitka in the twilight of his life.

But—and here on the upper river Field received a hint that interested him—"they say that Wes Litchfield is a rum-runner or bootlegger." Proof was not offered. It was simply an undefined, unsupported rumor to which Field ordinarily would have given no heed whatever. "They say" was too common an expression in small and remote communities to carry weight with him or make a deep impression. He understood too well that smoke did not necessarily mean fire in Alaska. In this particular case, however, he was compelled to think the rumor probably founded upon fact. He was unable to discover the purpose of Litchfield's trip to Whitehorse. His immediate occupation was invisible. Alaska was "dry" and the Yukon Territory and British Columbia "wet." It was comparatively easy to smuggle liquor across the line. Such traffic was continuous and could not be wholly checked or suppressed. Litchfield was shrewd enough to engage in it successfully, if he so willed. A few cases of bonded liquor transported in his gas boat to mining points in the interior would

find ready sale and command fancy prices and yield handsome profits.

Giving just credence to the favorable reports about the man, and convinced of his generosity and kind-heartedness and clean and circumspect personal behavior, Field reluctantly accepted the theory that Litchfield was, indeed, operating in alcoholics. At Eagle he had obtained a fragmentary bit of evidence which tended to confirm and strengthen the suspicion and theory. Strangely, if gone down the river, Litchfield did not stop at Dawson, nor had he been seen at other points.

Losing no time, Mark Field hastened on as best he could to Tanana, from which point Lyle Blake had written to Juneau. There he felt sure of enlightenment concerning the girl's movements. She could not be there an hour without the entire town being apprised of her presence. Wayne Roberts' confident belief as expressed to the Governor—"Locate Wes Litchfield and you will find Miss Blake"—was likewise now Mark Field's positive conviction.

He was five days reaching Tanana, and there found it more difficult than he had conceived to obtain any trace of the girl. Six weeks had passed since she wrote. A boat arriving from Dawson about that time, he learned, brought only a few passengers, and these, with the exception of residents, tarried briefly and went on. Those destined to Nenana and Fairbanks secured passage up the Tanana River on the army boat, General Jacobs, plying between Ft. Gibbon (Tanana) and Nenana, the then terminus of the narrow-gauge branch of the government railroad from Fairbanks.

The postmaster remembered that a girl in outing garb bought some stamps and made inquiries at the window, but he could not say whether it was the day

the boat came or the day before. His description of her fitted Lyle Blake.

From the store-keepers Field elicited like unsatisfactory information, and it became clear to him that her stay had been very limited.

Deft questioning of a sergeant at the post who had been a passenger on the steamer Selkirk was equally unproductive.

"Did you chance to meet Miss Lyle Blake on the trip?" finally asked Field directly. Hitherto he had questioned him impersonally.

"I met everybody aboard," answered the sergeant, "but not that young lady."

Certainly he could not have overlooked Lyle Blake. She could not be overlooked.

Field was in a quandary. His task of tracing her in that small community—in anticipation seemingly so easy—had come to naught.

Thereupon he turned diligent inquiry into another channel. He sought word of Wes Litchfield. Had he gone down the river?

Everybody knew him, but nobody had seen him since he went up the river in the early summer.

Going to the office of the United States Commissioner, Field took that official into his confidence, after disclosing that he was representing the Governor.

"I am trying to locate Wes Litchfield," said he, "and should like any aid you can give me."

"We have been on the lookout for him ourselves for a month," answered the Commissioner, "but he has not shown up in these parts."

"You are sure?"

"Absolutely. The deputy marshal has guarded the shore day and night. Litchfield is suspected of bringing whisky into the Territory and I received orders

to search his boat under some pretext and seize any contraband aboard and hold him."

The deputy marshal came in and Field interrogated him closely. He, too, was certain the man had not reached Tanana.

A perplexing situation was thus far presented. Litchfield had been seen nowhere between Whitehorse and Tanana. He had covered his movements completely. If Lyle Blake was aboard his craft, he had obviously not only gone through Tanana, but stopped in passing. She could not have sent her postcard ashore to be mailed. It bore a picture of Ft. Gibbon and was plainly purchased in the town.

In spite of the protestation of the Commissioner and deputy marshal that Litchfield had not gone down the river, and their insistence that they would overhaul him in due time, Field's better judgment told him that the rum-runner, if such he was, had cleverely eluded the officials and was now well down the lower river. Yet he had boldly risked capture by allowing Lyle Blake to go ashore, assuming that he was spiriting her away.

Whether to continue down the river, traveling on a loaded barge from Mayo, then in port, or remain in Tanana awaiting developments, Field could not at once decide. He telegraphed the Governor in code at Anchorage, acquainting him with the facts to date, and asking instructions. The Governor answered promptly, telling him to meet him at Healy, coming by way of Nenana.

A two days' wait gave him opportunity further to conduct his investigation and also to study conditions at this junction of the two rivers—the Yukon and the Tanana—which he embraced to the limit. Always observant on his missions for the Governor, Field made mental note of the facts of moment and later

set them down in a general report submitted at administrative headquarters.

Tanana was inert—painfully dull. In keeping with other Alaskan communities, it was losing population. Once a busy distributing center at the confluence of the great navigable waters of the interior, it was today almost wholly dependent for support upon the Ft. Gibbon army post, which had only a small detachment of men. There was a disquieting fear, soon to be realized, that with the completion of the government railroad Ft. Gibbon would be abandoned in favor of a more accessible base.

From 1914 river traffic had decreased. Its diversion in large measure to the quicker and cheaper rail route was manifestly ordained. The Northern Navigation Company, a subsidiary of the Northern Commercial Company, had sold its river rights and properties to the White Pass, and this company, operating its steamers in conjunction with its railroad, was giving less attention to the river below Dawson. Evidently it saw the handwriting on the wall and recognized the futility of endeavor to meet competition for business in the interior region contiguous to Fairbanks. Such business would go to the government railroad naturally and logically. Foreseeing the inevitable, transportation facilities on the Yukon below Dawson were steadily being curtailed and the supplementary service on the Tanana was deteriorating simultaneously.

In its heyday the Tanana River harbor at Fairbanks presented a lively scene. Steamers arriving and departing, unloading and loading, gave life to the thriving interior center. Until recent years, pending the completion of the Valdez-Fairbanks trail or highway, Fairbanks could be reached only by the river route from Whitehorse and Dawson, via Daw-

son, or by dog-team in winter. Now expeditious ingress was not only offered by the completed trail or highway, but modern transit by rail was within early eventuation.

A transformation was under way which meant renewed prosperity to Fairbanks, but did not spell growth to Tanana.

Big steamers that formerly plied between Tanana and St. Michael and carried heavy freight and many passengers were out of commission. Thus Tanana was not merely marking time, but actually going backward. The prospective abandonment of the army post would prove an all but fatal blow. To Tanana, unlike interior communities generally, the building of the railroad was not a boon. Ultimately it undoubtedly would share the benefits accruing from the opening up of the Territory, but not immediately. Geographically it was ill-placed.

Nenana, up the Tanana River, a mere Indian trading post and mission of a few years ago, had become a railroad construction base, with shops and power house, and there a mammoth steel bridge would be built at a cost of two millions. Nenana was thriving and out-numbered Tanana.

A true Alaskan, Mark Field deplored the conditions unfolded to him in their heavy bearing down upon Tanana. He knew the town and its sturdy citizenry and felt deep sympathy. Too many communities had undergone similar undoing with the exhaustion of placer mining camps and the passing of booms. Prosperity had come and gone. The spectacle of abandoned military posts and deserted villages encountered on his travels, along the coast as well as in the interior, was pathetic and distressing in the extreme and moved him to pity.

He appreciated the force of the argument repeat-

edly made by the Governor that only through a broad-upbuilding general policy of development and a looking and planning far ahead could Alaska be brought into its own. His observations confirmed and reinforced this argument, and the analysis of conditions contained in his report, received some weeks later at Juneau, was esteemed of sufficient value for copying and transmission to Washington.

An hour before his departure for Nenana on the General Jacobs he was given an important bit of information by a pioneer acquaintance who had learned of the inquiries regarding Wes Litchfield. A gas boat or two gas boats, the frontiersman said, had landed on the other side of the river below town one day early in August and a man had rowed across in a skiff and landed a boy, who went into town, returning in a short time and being conveyed back to the boats, which put down the river, one towing the other. He had watched them with idle curiosity, but without suspicion, froom his cabin. The episode would not have been recalled but for the inquiries reaching him through the deputy marshal.

Mark Field was convinced the man was Wes Litchfield and the "boy" not a boy, but a girl in hiking costume, Lyle Blake.

CHAPTER VIII.

WESTWARD HO!

AS HE was not given to seasickness, the Governor's trip on the Alameda, from Juneau to Seward, did not disturb him. He had made it twice before and enjoyed it.

The voyage across the Gulf of Alaska, sometimes so rough as to keep voyagers close to their staterooms for thirty-six hours, was this time easy, and he put in appearance regularly for meals. Although familiar with the scenery, he never tired of it. He revelled in the beauty of Mt. St. Elias, which, happily, was not obscured by haze.

Mt. M'Kinley, seen only from points in the interior, unhappily, had always been out of view when he was within range. A treat was, therefore, in store for him on this trip, he hoped, in a glimpse of this loftiest American peak, which, singularly, escaped national interest and attention until late in the nineteenth century. Archdeacon Stuck, sleeping his last sleep at Ft. Yukon, in the Arctic Circle, had given it added fame by his memorable climb. The Governor was not a mountain-climber, but in his vision he saw in Mt. M'Kinley and its environs the Yellowstone of the Northland, destined in time to attract tourists from all the world. It was within reach of the railroad, but roads and trails, outfitting camps, roadhouses and one good hotel, at least, would be required to make it accessible and inviting. He would aid in bringing this about. There was money in abundance to build roads in forests, where few roads were urgently needed, but not a dollar of it was available for use in this national park and none could

be diverted. He had faith in Congress, however, and was sanguine in the prospect.

Some oddly-constituted travelers occasionally become surfeited with the beauties of Alaskan mountains and water.

His little daughter was fond of telling an experience on a recent trip to Sitka. Sitting in a sheltered corner on the upper deck of the Spokane, she was desultorily engaged in a bit of fancywork while absorbing the changing panorama when a feminine tourist from Boston approached and said:

"How I envy you! If I had only brought my knitting along!"

"You are enjoying the scenery?"

"Enjoying it!" exclaimed the tourist, sharply. "I was never so bored in my life. Why, there's nothing but scenery If I had known it, I shouldn't have come."

She was as pessimistic as once was Speaker Tom Reed, who, referring to a tariff debate raging in the House, from which he had absented himself, said, wearily: "Oh, there's nothing but language—nothing but language."

The Boston lady's unappreciative state of mind rendered the daughter momentarily speechless, and she ventured no response. She could not comprehend a nature so perverse as to be bored by the endlessly new and varying beauties of a jaunt to picturesque Sitka. But the conversation was not allowed to lag.

"What's the use of looking at scenery?" pursued Madame Bostonese. "It isn't worth while. If I had my knitting, I could forget this tedious journey until it is done."

The daughter remained dumb.

"Where do you live?" persisted the tourist.

"Juneau."

"Juneau! Why do you live there?"

"I like it."

"You do? How strange! Have you always lived there?"

"No."

"Where did you come from?"

"New York."

"From New York to Juneau! Heavens! I never heard anything so funny. You don't intend to remain?"

"Yes, some time, perhaps." She thought it might be for three years more, but that was her father's business, and she elected to be indefinite.

"And you really mean to tell me you like it?"

"I love Alaska and am very happy."

"Well, well, well," coldly sniffed the weary tourist, as she haughtily turned to descend, as uncomprehending of the daughter as the daughter was uncomprehending of her.

It brought to the Governor's mind, also, an incident at an interment camp at Salt Lake, in world war times, where, on a press mission, he became acquainted with a disconsolate German commander deprived of his liberty. Upon being interned, this officer of the Kaiser's navy had given vent to violent passion, raging like a maniac and tearing his clothes to tatters. As necessary discipline, the Colonel thereupon compelled him to go about virtually in shirttail negligee until he cooled off. This tamed him to the stage of eating out of hand. Clothed and in his right mind, he was an over-Kultured, yet not unlikable, gentleman, but still restive and fretful in restraint.

Under the soothing influence of a cigarette, he talked pleasantly with his visitor, who, beholding

the mountains and sky revealed above the walls, remarked upon the beauty of the environment.

"To h— with the environment," brusquely rejoined the captive. "You cannot live on environment."

Under compulsion, it was only fair to admit, it might be difficult, but traveling at leisure and in comfort and finding the environment of this wonderful Northland monotonous and wearisome was no less puzzling to the Governor than it had been to his happy daughter. Thinking of it all and enraptured anew in passing Mt. St. Elias, he wished she were with him to give added brightness to his journey.

The gulf, relatively calm, was beautifully blue.

Few tourists go to the westward, where colossal Alaska lies, but limit their sight-seeing to the Inside Passage, a scenic stretch and strip of incomparable beauty, and go home fancying they have seen and know Alaska. Blissful ignorance! Seward's purchase is not to be vizualized in a fortnight, a month or a year, or by travel of two thousand miles, or yet ten thousand miles. Without going to Valdez or Seward and into the interior by trail or rail, or journeying over the White Pass and the length of the dark, mighty Yukon River, an adequate conception of the Territory's vastness is impossible. Having in a decade made these journeys, the first repeatedly, and been up into the Arctic seas and visited the seal islands and the Aleutian group, he was still unfamiliar with Kodiak and "The Valley of Ten Thousand Smokes" and had yet to penetrate the Kuskokwim, and see Mt. M'Kinley Park and find time to reach Point Barrow. Indeed, even then there would be islands innumerable, here, there, everywhere, and untraversed mountain land and wastes of inland tundra he could never hope at close range to see. He

had seen more of the strange domain than the average Alaskan had seen, but had only begun to see and learn.

Aboard the Alameda there was not a breath of pessimism. He was in optimistic company. The good ship was carrying men and women toward various destinations—Cordova, Kennicott, Latouche, Valdez, Seward, Anchorage, Willow Creek, Talkeetna, Healy, Nenana, Fairbanks, M'Grath, Ophir, Iditarod, Holy Cross, Bethel, Kodiak, Bristol Bay, Dutch Harbor and Unalaska. He fraternized with them and heard them talk with profit.

One and all evinced the true Alaskan spirit and the utmost faith in the country of their adoption. In spite of ups and downs, of hopes deferred and dreams unrealized, they believed in Alaska. They had been "out"—few farther than Seattle—and were glad to be "in" and were here to stay. Some confessed that they had gone away intending to stay, but the lure of Alaska had brought them back.

Wayne Roberts frequently accompanied the Governor in his daily constitutionals around the broad, invigorating decks, but scrupulously avoided the semblance of obtrusion. He was companionable, and they found much of mutual interest to talk about. By tacit assent the subject closest to the young man's heart was not referred to on their walks, but one evening near the end of their journey he came to the Governor's state-room and with characteristic directness told of his plans.

"I am anxious to join Mr. Field," said he, "and shall be at his service and command. Together, I think we can facilitate the search and the more quickly find her. I am sure she is safe."

"Field expects to meet me at Healy," said the Governor, "but I have decided not to go over the

gap and shall direct him to join us at this end of steel—probably about mile 300. He will be there. You may depend upon that."

"I understand," the young man responded, "and we shall lose no time getting over the Rainy Pass to the Kuskokwim. The trail starts from Lake Nancy, I believe."

"There or thereabout," said the Governor.

It was plain that Roberts had carefully studied the map and his knowledge of the geography was gratifying, but not unexpected. His conversation had previously disclosed a remarkable fund of Alaskan information.

"I am prepared to meet any reasonable expense," he said, "and feel that we should go well equipped for the search. Mr. Field knows every foot of that part of the country, you tell me, but it may not be advisable to keep together all the time, and horses and a guide may be required."

"You are still convinced that Wes Litchfield spirited her away?" asked the Governor.

"I should not say 'spirited,' or that it is in any sense a case of kidnaping. That in locating him we shall find her, and unharmed, I have not the remotest doubt."

He spoke with a positive assurance that surprised the Governor, who, after a moment's thought, asked:

"You had a satisfactory interview with her mother?"

"Most satisfactory. But it was not in the form of an interview. I gave her my confidence unreservedly and soon her reserve and diffidence passed. She trusts me and, though she continues to worry, she is no longer apprehensive and distressed. I gave her my word that her daughter should be restored to her. Their resemblance is striking, and they possess the

same sweet natures. I hold sacred much that the mother said to me, and treasure the memory of evenings with her in her cottage home." He had come from there to the boat, he added.

Seward was in a drenching rainstorm when the Alameda reached harbor in Resurrection Bay, but the dock was crowded by way of greeting. A committee escorted the Governor to a train in waiting for his inspection tour of the railroad. Immediately he boarded it, with Wayne Roberts, and started for Anchorage over the Kenai Mountains toward the end of steel. With clearing skies in the afternoon, the views from the observation car were interesting and beautiful.

Construction difficulties were great along this branch of the railroad. A wonderful loop over and through gorges and canyons gave added picturesqueness to the journey. The train moved slowly because of the newness of the roadbed and bridges.

Grasping the engineering problems involved in construction, Wayne Roberts praised with enthusiasm the work accomplished, and declared Uncle Sam had "a real railroad." When told that its builders had been under almost a steady fire of criticism, he took this for granted. It was commonly so in big public undertakings. Such achievements, he said, seldom received immediate or just recognition.

Reaching Anchorage in the evening, the well-lighted town was wide-awake and attractive. Only a few years old, it was physically unlike any other Alaskan community. It resembled a young and prosperous Western county seat in the States, not one developed out of the hurried necessities of a mining camp, but laid out and built with some forethought, and making the most of its opportunities. Under governmental authority, its inceptive growth and ex-

"Within an hour he appeared, wearing corduroy and heavy boots, and carrying a pack." [p. 94]

pansion had been properly directed and, now a municipality, it presented a sprightly, up-to-date, unweather-beaten appearance. It had undergone no reverses, but been kept affluent by the fat payroll incident to the railroad. The building of shops and foundries, a warehouse and hospital, was accompanied by individual enterprise in the putting up of business structures, hotels, motion picture theaters and dwellings. Anchorage had clubs and boasted its climate and possessed a bathing beach. In no direction had it overlooked the main chance.

The Governor's initial stay was for a few hours only. A train was ready and took him by night to the end of steel, that he might, returning, travel the length of the finished portion of the main line by daylight. Wayne Roberts accompanied him.

In the early morning the end of steel was reached, and there, at mile 306, a monster track-laying machine was seen at work. The gap between rails was being closed at the rate of a mile or more a day. Every man of the force employed was on his job.

Frost was in the air and a light snow covered the ground. The temperature was invigorating. Broad Pass was unpeopled. Only the construction gangs occupying cabooses along the way gave life and habitation to the strange country. A caterpillar truck rattling over the hills, bringing supplies to camp, produced resounding echoes.

A reindeer herd, driven from the Kuskokwin and Innoka to these fertile pastures, was near but not yet in sight.

The sweeping vista was melancholy in its loneliness. Visualized aright, it became alive with brightest promise. God had created it to be utilized for the good of His children. For centuries it had re-

mained a colossal waste and wilderness; now it was being opened to civilization.

"What hath man wrought!" silently exclaimed the Governor.

The building into this unknown land of this railroad leading to the top of the world was of momentous meaning. A gigantic undertaking had gone unheeded by the busy world outside. He was deeply impressed and overwhelmed by the magnitude and portent of it all. Some day Alaska would come into its own and enter the Union. Then this wonderful pioneering would be appreciated and understood.

Mt. M'Kinley, towering 20,300 feet above sea level, was within range of the Broad Pass, but hidden by mist. Again was he denied the view he longed for. This alone was needed to crown the morning. But he would travel frequently over the new railroad, Providence permitting, and could wait. Sometime, surely, he would see the peak in all its grandeur.

Wayne Roberts reminded him that Mark Field had not joined them as expected.

Thereupon the Governor made injuiry and learned that his agent was at LeGault's, a few miles distant, having mushed across the gap and reached the road-house the night before. The train waited for him.

Within an hour he appeared, wearing corduroy and heavy boots, and carrying a pack. A longer journey before him, he was prepared for it.

The Governor started to introduce the young men, forgetful for the moment of their meeting on the Yukon, whereat they smiled and shook hands warmly. Field was of larger avoirdupois and more muscular, but Roberts equalled him in height and looked quite as athletic. The three boarded the observation

car and had a conference. Field was told of the plan for Roberts to unite with him in the search for Lyle Blake, and assented promptly. The Governor's wishes and judgment were his always. He regretted he had nothing tangible to report, but said he was convinced that Wes Litchfield had outwitted surveillance at Tanana and points on the upper river, and long since reached the Kuskokwim. Roberts concurred in the theory. Both were positive the girl had come to no harm. Field spoke of the uniform information given him as to Litchfield's gentleness and worthy personal behavior. He was, no doubt, engaged in transporting liquor; certainly he had secured a supply at Whitehorse; but, otherwise, he was unoffending and everybody who knew him bore testimony to his clean life and good heartedness.

Under what pretext the old man had induced the girl to accompany him, or kidnaped her, Field added, he was unable to divine.

"We shall find," said Roberts, confiidently, "once she is found, that she was not kidnaped."

On the return trip, keenly observant, the Governor and Roberts overlooked nothing. Field relaxed and rested. The mushing across the gap was the hardest he had ever made, due to a recent rainfall.

In proof of substantial construction, a speed of fifty miles an hour was attained over settled track after crossing the great Hurricane Gulch bridge. The Talkeetna Mountains afforded beautiful bits of scenery.

At Curry, originally called Dead Horse, but changed of name for propriety's sake and in honor of one of the Territory's staunch champions in Congress, a short stop was made to become acquainted with the road-house keeper, Nellie Neill, and her pet bear.

Having right-of-way, few additional stops were made until Lake Nancy—so christened in compliment to the daughter of a deceased cabinet officer, Franklin K. Lane—was reached. This was the starting point of the trail leading across the Rainy Pass to M'Grath and into the Kuskokwim, and here Roberts and Field said good-bye to the Governor and alighted.

In rough out-door garb, they were a pair of robust frontiersmen. They proposed traveling light. As they would be out of touch with the mail or wire, the Governor did not enjoin them to report progress, but provided them with official letters of credit that might be useful. Iditarod, he mentioned, had a bank under Territorial charter and supervision, which would be subject to their call. He knew they would communicate with him at earliest possibility when there was anything to tell, and could only wish them good luck in parting.

He was in a deep study after they left him, but, from the rear platform, kept close eye upon the receding track and watched changing conditions.

He stopped at Anchorage returning, to see the thriving town by daylight, and a sojourn at Seward the next day proved enjoyable to the utmost. Situated on beautiful Resurrection Bay, never had he seen a more attractive townsite. Its environment was comparable to Sitka's and the delight of beauty-loving tourists. It had much to offer in being the gateway to the interior and the central and larger port contiguous to the Alaska Peninsula and islands to the far westward. He had faith in its future. But, in the face of manifest advantages, Seward was now unhappy. It had not profited by the building of the railroad, as had Anchorage. He brought words of cheer and enunciated them with confidence. Seward

would without doubt share handsomely in the benefits accruing from the completed railroad and the further development surely destined to ensue.

The next day, by the Alameda, he began his homeward journey across Prince William Sound and the oft-turbulent, but again calm, Gulf of Alaska.

Meanwhile, Field and Roberts had set off on the long trail, and official advices from the Capital informed him that no tidings had come of the missing girl.

CHAPTER IX.

IMBUED WITH FAITH AND COURAGE

AT THE Capital, during the Governor's absence, Mrs. Blake visited the Mansion more frequently. A marked change had come over her. No longer was she in dread of bad tidings, but buoyant with faith and courage. Her smile was natural and the air of anxiety or resignation gone. She engaged in conversation, ceased to shun contact with visitors, consented to appear at a Thursday afternoon "at home" and developed an interest in the life of the town. Her gentility impressed those who met her. In one respect only was she reserved and distant. She studiously refrained from talking about herself.

To Juneau she was known as a visitor from the East, a friend of the Governor's family. She vouchsafed no information why she came, or how long she should stay, and there was never a hint of her quest for the missing girl.

Her cottage on the mountain-side was unneglected, but she did not, as formerly, seek its seclusion and spend hours and days alone.

One glorious Autumn evening the Governor's wife and daughter dined with her, and she delightedly served a dainty meal of her own making. She was bright and cheery and, in a reminiscent mood, as they lingered at the table, she talked of Lyle and how they had once gone camping on the Wabash, when she read to her Charles Major's "Bears of Blue River" and they fancied it was true.

"Neither of us dreamed then," said she, "that we should ever be in this strange, far-away land of real bears and great rivers, and I living on a mountain

slope and she—blessed child!—lost in the wilds. It seems unreal. But we are safe and will be reunited."

She brought a portfolio containing pictures of Lyle taken at various stages of her girlhood, one of them a snap-shot scene of the camp of which she had spoken. The girl, then eighteen, was just out of high school. There were autographs with the pictures and, turning the pages, the daughter found a sentiment recently inscribed, which read:

> "Like mother, like child. Heaven bless you both! Peace unto you. All is well.
> "Sept. —, 1921." "WAYNE ROBERTS.

Noting the interest of her guests and their surprise, Mrs. Blake said:

"He wrote it just before he went to the boat to join the Governor. I prize it. His assurance 'all is well,' imbued me with renewed courage. I repeat it hourly and it banishes every fear. She is unharmed and he will find her. God tells me so."

The Governor had mentioned the young man's intended call at the cottage, but his wife and daughter had remembered it only as an incident and this evidence of a close relationship was a revelation. Mrs. Blake had not before spoken of him. Intuitively this told them that mutual confidence, born of mutual love of the missing girl, had been exchanged, and to this fact was ascribed the marked change that had come over the hitherto distressed mother.

Closing the portfolio and placing it on the shelf, her animation returned. She beckoned them to the door to view the golden sunset on the Chilkats beyond Lynn Canal, and its reflection upon the Gastineau Channel. The lights of the mining mill were beginning to twinkle, star-like. Across the water Douglas and Treadwell were outlined and illuminated by electricity's rays. Thane, on the other side,

similarly assumed its nightly garb. Shortened days reduced the twilight. Mts. Juneau, Roberts and Jumbo towered mightily as guardians of the scene. Visualizing it from the doorway they were lost in the charms of the spectacle.

The Governor's wife remarked upon Mrs. Blake's good fortune in finding so cozy a home in such a rare spot.

"I did not find it," she responded. "It was your dear child—bless her!—who found it for me. It was her sweet companionship that brought me here. Next to Lyle I love her the most." And she hugged the little daughter.

"You are never afraid?"

"Never! I could sleep peacefully with the doors unlocked. I am secure in Nature's keeping. The trees soothe me and the wind lulls me. Rain is music to my ears. If a big brown bruin or a small black one came straggling to the door I should know he was hungry and give him a breakfast. Only creeping things do I abhor, and a merciful Providence has bestowed an infinite blessing upon Alaska in allowing no snakes. Friends of mine, one and all, are the rest of God's creatures. Afraid! I do not know what fear is in this mountain retreat."

She went part of the way homeward with her guests, down the winding steps, past other snug cottages, within a stone throw of one another, each with a garden, to the highway at the foot of the slope. There she said an affectionate good-night.

It was but a short jaunt to the Mansion. They turned repeatedly and watched her ascending the steps. Soon she appeared dimly in the door of the cottage and waved to them.

Mrs. Blake, in common with Juneau folks, awaited the incoming steamers eagerly and, unless

they arrived late at night, she invariably went to the post-office within an hour for her mail. She could not comprehend why Lyle's letters did not reach her. That she had written regularly, the mother had not the vaguest doubt. She was puzzled by the fact that a card had come to the Governor's daughter from Nenana and none to her. Of course, Lyle did not know she was out here, and it would go to Indiana and be sent back across the Continent and on to Juneau. Why did it not come? She had left explicit instructions for the forwarding of her mail promptly and, a month ago, had telegraphed to make sure that this was being done. Letters were reaching her from friends in the East, but not a word from Lyle.

The Jefferson put into port one evening late in September, bringing five days' mail from Seattle. Mrs. Blake, expectant, was waiting as usual for its distribution. She watched her box vigilantly and, after an hour, was rewarded with a letter. It was from Indiana. Opening it, she found a telegraph message enclosed—and from Lyle! But it was a month old. Dated at Nulato, a wireless station on the Yukon, below the mouth of the Koyukuk, it had evidently been delayed in transit. There were ten carefully counted words as follows:

"Nulato, Sept. —, 1921.

"Unable to reach Fairbanks. Am writing. Do not worry. Well. "LYLE."

Inasmuch as the message, on its face, was not urgent, it had not, upon receipt, been transmitted by wire to Juneau, but enclosed in a letter. This was upon the advice of the telegraph agent in Indiana. It had been delayed several days, and he was doubtful whether it would ever reach Juneau. Besides the tolls were heavy and the mail safer.

Nulato! Where was Nulato? Mrs. Blake hurried

from the post-office to the Mansion to show the message and ascertain the location of Nulato.

The Governor's wife readily pointed it out on the map—some 300 miles below Tanana on the Yukon. She remembered it well as an Indian village which she had visited eight years ago while traveling on the Sara with a party of tourists. An epidemic of diphtheria, a short time before, had brought death to forty infants and children, and they were buried on the crest of the hill above the village. Their new-made graves were enclosed with railings painted in lurid hues, and the odd burying plot stood out like a rainbow. Tourists were mystified when it came into view miles distant. Upon reaching Nulato they went ashore and climbed the hill to the curious cemetery. All the graves of the stricken tots were laden and adorned with toys and other playthings that had given joy to their lives. Upon the mound of a mother was a sewing machine. Thus do the natives pay tribute to their dead and prepare them for awakening. One-third of Nulato's population had been taken by the scourge. Doctors and nurses were lacking, and the toll of mortality was levied before they could reach the remote community. A wireless station was established there a few years later to meet the needs of people for hundreds of miles around who would otherwise be cut off from the world, especially in the winter season.

Mrs. Blake heard all this with deepest interest. It meant more to her because Lyle's message came from Nulato. No doubt the girl had visited the cemetery. But why had she gone down the Yukon? Why could she not reach Fairbanks? There was a valid reason, she felt, and everything would ultimately be made perfectly clear, but, for the moment, it was mystifying. Nevertheless she was not cast

down. "Do not worry," Lyle enjoined her, and she was not worrying. She prized the belated message and was full of gratitude to Uncle Sam for establishing that wireless station. It was worth much to be assured that her daughter was well. Of course she was writing. She never failed to write. But why did her letters not come?

There was further talk of the lower Yukon while the mother studied the map and familiarized herself with the winding course of the great river. The Governor's wife told her of the splendid mission two days or more below Nulato, at Holy Cross, where well-trained Indian children had marched down to the shore singing patriotic songs and waving small American flags to greet the touring party, and of the Russian mission, farther below, where on a short stop, late in the evening, the air was so alive with gnats as to precipitate a return to the shelter of the steamer. But stout-hearted teachers, dedicated to humanity's service, were unmindful of such discomforts.

She told, also, of a brief sojourn at Mountain Village to view a herd of reindeer, and of the queer Eskimo people, some of whom lived in holes in the ground. A funny little grandma, a dwarf, chattering in strange, squeaky tongue, looked as if she had survived the ages. In Norton Sound, while waiting for the tide, young Eskimo men and women rowed out to the Sara and danced on the lower deck for the entertainment of the tourists. The women were indifferent to the dimes and quarters showered upon them, but greedily seized hair-pins thrown down by the ladies. Such rewards moved them to dance furiously and respond to encores repeatedly.

Listening to these incidents of Yukon travel, Mrs.

Blake continued to study the map and traced the trail that Mark Field and Wayne Roberts had taken toward the Kuskokwim.

"He will find her," she said, again and again, referring to Roberts, in whom she placed implicit confidence. She did not know Field, in whom, owing to his intimate knowledge of the country, the Governor's family placed the utmost reliance.

She was assured that the girl could not file a telegram at Nulato without being remembered vividly. The Sara was long out of commission, together with other large boats formerly in the service of the old Commercial Company, and it would be all the easier to locate a passenger on one of the small steamers now operating on the lower Yukon. A traveler might escape identification passing through Dawson, or Tanana, which had obviously happened in this case, but could not possibly stop at Nulato or Holy Cross or any other lower river point and be unobserved and unknown. Whatever the purpose of the journey and the explanation of her failure to reach Fairbanks, everything would be understood when she was found or heard from.

When the cable office opened the following morning she sent a telegram to her home in Indiana, directing positively that any message hereafter coming to her, regardless of its purport, be transmitted to Juneau without delay.

Upon his return from the westward and interior, a few days later, the Governor undertook to learn the cause of the delay of the wireless from Nulato, but without success. The marks on the message as received were confusing. In his own free use of the radio and cable delays were infrequent and the combined service extraordinarily reliable, considering distances and conditions. The reluctance on the part

of the telegraph agent in Indiana to try to reach Juneau by wire was understandable. It was due to ignorance of Alaska proverbially encountered in the East. In New York and Washington it was difficult to convince people who ought to know that Juneau was an open and accessible port all the year around and in wire communication with the world, and post-offices in the States had been known to refuse to accept mail or issue money orders to Alaska on the theory that it was ice-bound and beyond reach. Hence the Indiana telegraph agent might be forgiven. It was the Governor's hope to remove, in a degree, in time, some of this popular ignorance. He was doing his best by pen and tongue. But good friends back East were still commiserating with him for living among ice-bergs and polar bears and having no means of egress other than by dog team. A persistent and unceasing campaign of education was required to spread the truth about Alaska and dispel the untruths promulgated in text-books of generations gone, and he was pushing such a campaign aggressively.

A fortnight later Mrs. Blake, to her inexpressible joy, received a bulky letter and two post-cards from her missing daughter. They bore the postmark of Circle, Alaska, and, addressed to her in Indiana, had been long on the way. The cards contained messages from Skagway and Whitehorse, one written at the summit of the White Pass, and the long letter had its origin at Whitehorse. It gave a detailed account of her trip that far.

Strangely, American stamps had been substituted for the Canadian stamps initially intended to carry the cards and letter. The girl wrote with characteristic enthusiasm of the wonderful voyage through

the Lynn Canal, and mentioned friends she had made, including Wayne Roberts.

In closing, she said that while she was eager to reach Fairbanks and take up her school work, she did not want to miss anything, and felt that to travel on the great Yukon was "an opportunity of a lifetime."

Reading and re-reading the letter with motherly zest, Mrs. Blake could not hide her deep disappointment. Weeks had elapsed since the letter was written. It gave not the slightest clue to her daughter's present whereabouts. Indeed, although of consuming interest in coming from precious hands and conveying cherished sentiments of love, it added not an iota of new information. Determined not to worry, in obedience to the wireless injunction from Nulato, and still fortified with implicit faith and courage, the mystery of the entire situation was, nevertheless, trying in the extreme.

Again she went to the Mansion to study the map hanging in the study and talk with her friends.

Circle, whence the mail came, is conspicuously located within the Arctic Circle, the first trading post of importance beyond Eagle, the port of entry, at the boundary, and she was quickly informed geographically. Why the letter and cards were posted at that remote point instead of at Whitehorse was inexplicable. The mother instantly rejected the suggestion that Lyle had possibly forgotten to mail them before starting down the river. It was unlike her. Why, if such was the case, she would have mailed them at Dawson. She could not reach Circle without passing through Dawson. And what explanation was conceivable of her unclaimed trunk at Dawson? Certainly she would not deliberately leave it there.

The more the facts were discussed and analyzed the more confusing and baffling they became.

"It is all beyond immediate explanation," said the Governor, "and we can only be patient and wait."

He admitted that he could not quite comprehend Mark Field's failure to obtain the least trace of the girl on his trip to Dawson and Eagle. It was very plain, in view of the card sent from Tanana and the message wired from Nulato, that she was now in the lower interior country—doubtless by this time in the Kuskokwim—and Field and Roberts would surely find her.

His confidence inspired the mother with renewed courage.

"I promise not to worry and shall continue to sleep soundly," she said, bravely, as she departed to her cottage.

As the days passed and Winter approached, Mrs. Blake, eagerly watching the mails, continued to be cheerful and confident and extended her acquaintance in hospitable Juneau.

PART II

CHAPTER X.

AT THE RAPIDS AND BELOW

LYLE BLAKE was light-hearted and the world looked very bright to her that evening in July when she followed Wes Litchfield, he carrying her suit-case, out of the little hotel at Whitehorse. She had overlooked nothing and was care-free.

In love with life, a worshipper of the sun, moon, stars, hills, mountains, rocks and waters, she was attuned to nature and altogether happy. Scenery never palled upon her. Everything charmed her poetic soul. She thanked God for giving her the rare privilege of seeing the glories of this wonderland and knowing the big-hearted people who had been so good and kind to her. Her blood warmed and her pulse beat fast in gratitude and appreciation.

Every hour her devoted mother back in Indiana was in her mind. How she would enjoy it! Sometime she must come to Alaska.

Each night, although now really there was no night on the Yukon, before saying her prayer, the enthusiastic girl religiously noted in her diary incidents, events and impressions and names of people she had met, that they might safely be preserved and never pass from memory.

Thrice during her stay she had watched in awe and wonder the rapids at the head of navigation above—

> *"Where the river boils in a crazy swirl,
> While its wave crests tumble and madly curl
> Over the stranger who dares the tide
> Down which in safety no man may ride."

She had seen a foolhardy individual dare the tide and shoot the rapids in a canoe for the entertainment

*Robert Service.

of a party of tourists, and she trembled and chilled at the sight. Why would men thus defy the elements and challenge mighty forces? She thought it wicked. Daily the spectacle was repeated, but she refused to witness it again. The rapids held her spell-bound. Risk of life added nothing to the wonder, but broke the spell and frightened her. She could not understand people who encouraged such mad hazards.

Walking along toward the steamer with Wes Litchfield, whose kindly face was illuminated with a perpetual smile, she exclaimed impulsively:

"Oh, Mr. Sourdough, I must have another look at the rapids before I go."

"Certainly you shall, child. And I want you to see my river home"—meaning his gas boat—"on the way."

"That will be splendid."

They could not keep step. His stride was longer, and he told her not to try. He regulated his pace.

"You will be weary with that bag," she enjoined, solicitously. "Can we not drop it somewhere?"

He laughed. "Your Mr. Sourdough become winded under such a load! Why, child, it is light as a feather. You forget that up here we carry heavy packs over the hills and for miles at a stretch and think nothing of it. But I'll leave it on my gas boat in passing."

Presently he left it there.

"Do you live on the river all the time?"

The query amused him. "No, no, child," he chuckled. "I'm fond of it, but the good old stream is uninhabitable three-fourths of the year. How could I be your Mr. Sourdough, had I not seen the ice go out."

"Forgive the slip and be patient with poor Cheechucko," she merrily retorted.

"Chechahco, as if you were saying 'chalk,' not 'chuck,' " he admonished her.

"Pity me. I seem never to say things right," she said, pouting, in a feigned tone of injury.

Instantly he was all tenderness and his smile vanished. He feared she was hurt.

"Bless you, child," he comforted her, "I love to hear you say things just your own way. It's the right way. It should be 'chuck.' Forgive your clumsy Mr. Sourdough."

He looked appealingly and his serious manner touched her. Feeling he had unwittingly given hurt, he himself was truly penitent.

She detected it intuitively. Brightening, she said, reassuringly:

"Really, wise Mr. Sourdough, you did not think I minded the correction? I must learn. How can I, if I be not told? I thank you for your help."

Then his smile returned.

Strolling, her thoughts centered in this kindly, white-haired old man by her side. She studied him. What was his history? Why had he chosen to leave home and friends to lead a lonely existence in this new land? She applauded his love of the river and mountains and the great outdoors, but could not grasp an existence void of home ties and loved ones and children. He was carrying a secret sorrrow, she surmised. Her appeal to him to pity her, an erring Chechacho, had moved him seriously. She should not again dissemble in his company or be other than herself.

Her gentle heart throbbed in sympathy for the polite, sensitive old man. Should she continue to call him "Mr. Sourdough"? Yes, he liked that, or she should have seen. She marvelled at his culture. Character was behind it or it could not have been retained.

How she wished she might know his life's story! He was eager for affection. That was plain.

Thinking of him, a hunger of her own young life seized her.

"How I have longed for a daddie," she had said to the Governor's daughter. She could not remember hers. He had died, she sadly added, when she was three.

She had missed much. Her dear mother had given her love in fuller measure to compensate for the lack of a father's love. Heaven bless that precious mother far away! But—from the time she was a very little girl she had comprehended the incompleteness of her life. Why was her father cruelly taken from her?

She could scarcely hide a tear, and forced a smile as they silently wandered along.

He, too, was meditative, she could tell.

If her daddie were only with her on this walk, how she should cling to his hand and snuggle up to him, and how happy they should be! For the moment she was in the verge of thinking aloud.

Studying him, she wondered what her strange companion was thinking about. He, also, she mentally conjectured, was looking backward and sorely realizing something he had missed. His countenance was serene. He beamed benignly. Absorbed in thought, he was yet happy. He spoke it in his eye and smile.

Unconsciously, they had slackened the pace. Their quick stride was of ten minutes gone.

She broke the silence by humming a tune—the air of a song her mother loved and sung. She gave it a plaintive cadence.

"When she paused, the old man asked:

"What were you singing, child?"

" 'God be with you till we meet again.' "

An expression of infinite sadness replaced his smile. The thought oppressed and distressed him. He stumbled and seemed about to fall. She took his arm and steadied him. He was the picture of woe. It alarmed her.

Recovering, he asked her in husky voice to sing "something else."

She responded with "The Long, Long Trail" in a low sweet key intended only for him. They stopped as she sang. She knew the words. He listened entranced.

"Go on, child. Sing it over, please," he pleaded.

Again the song reached his ears softly, dimmed by the sound of the rapids.

He would have had her sing on and on, but footsteps were approaching and belated twilight coming.

"Child," said her Mr. Sourdough, "I have heard that song in the wilds and under every conceivable condition, but never until tonight was it so meaningful to me. I shall treasure the memory of this walk."

"And so shall I."

"I've travelled that long, long trail," observed the old man.

"It does not end here," said she, lightly, as she ran to a rock of vantage the better to see the boiling, crazy swirl.

Facinated by the fantastic torrents, she gazed intently, occasionally glancing at the glorious sky, made golden in the West by the receding sun. As she lost herself in the wonders of nature, he kept his eyes fixed upon her. Enraptured by the sights and sounds, she enraptured him.

"I could never tire being here!" said the girl. "It thrills me. But I cannot tarry. Fairbanks lies beyond and I am on the way."

She chattered gayly going back, turning at intervals to catch farewell views.

"There are rapids below," said her devoted Mr. Sourdough, "and other thrills in store for you, child."

"I know—I know," she answered, enthusiastically, "but it seems too wonderful to last."

He still meditative, she now was alive with animation and stepped briskly.

Once she was on the point of asking him to give her a parting lesson in pronunciation and barely caught herself. He was serious and she should be emulative. Her mood was merry and not easily restrained.

Of poetic, romantic temperament, she was nevertheless a methodical and businesslike young person, ever careful to leave nothing undone or forgotten. As they neared his river home, the gas boat, snugly ensconced on the shore, within easy reach of the loading steamer Selkirk, she reviewed her arrangements for the trip to make doubly sure of no oversight.

"You mailed my letters, obliging Mr. Sourdough?" she inquired as a sort of afterthought. The day before, at the hotel, she had entrusted to him half a dozen or more to deposit in the post-office in order to go southward by the White Pass train this day.

"Could I ever fail you, child?" he answered, bowing gallantly.

"Men do forget, we are told."

"Your Mr. Sourdough forgets nothing, child."

The gas boat was anchored to a post close in shore and he asked the girl to wait a moment, as he stepped deftly in. Inmmediately she heard the whirr of the

engine and he turned on the lights, although the long day was not yet ended.

Re-appearing on the miniature stern deck, he extended his hand and assisted her aboard, with the remark that she was the first visitor whom he had not cautioned to "stoop." Her petiteness negatived the need.

"What a pretty home you have!" she exclaimed, looking about with admiration. "I am pleased to find my Mr. Sourdough a neat housekeeper."

His "Thank you, child," was not supplemented with the admission that he had busied himself for hours putting his house in order in anticipation of her coming.

It was as spic-and-span a little craft as any waters could claim, and bespoke the orderliness of its proud master. His smile broadened as she inspected every nook and corner and complimented him freely. She was captivated by its coziness and had never seen a boat akin to it. The small cargo it carried was largely accommodated in the engine-room, while boxes laden with stores in the cabin proper were neatly covered and served as tables. There was ample room to turn around. He had contrived, he told her, to reduce to the minimum the odor from the engine. The rear deck was protected above and possessed comfortable built-in seats on either side. A small row of books and a few magazines were in evidence in the cabin and a guitar hung above.

"Why, it's luxurious!" she declared, extravagantly. "Am I to doff my hat to my Mr. Sourdough as the designer?" She was wearing her tam o'shanter.

"Such honor is not for me, child," he answered. "Your Mr. Sourdough is not gifted in architecture. It was built in Seattle for use by a canneryman in

the Bristol Bay and in some fashion found its way, weather-beaten, into the Kuskokwim. I bought it at a marked-down price and put in a winter of leisure rehabilitating it and adding features of my fancy. If I cannot build a boat, I can take care of one."

"Evidently," said the girl. "I doff my hat in recognition of that." And doff it she charmingly did. "But you do not run it alone?"

"Oftentimes, yes, child. Coming up the river I have always brought a man to take turn at the wheel, but going down I can easily manage it myself. It makes fine speed with the current, averaging twelve knots, and I tie up at intervals to get a bit of sleep."

"What is her name?"

"Curiously, child, the fair sex was not betokened in the naming. It is the universal custom to speak of a vessel as 'her,' but nomenclature of river and sea constantly belies the custom. This boat was called the Harvey J., after the original owner, I believe, but I discarded it and painted it out and it has since had no other. Rivermen call it the Litchfield, however."

"Naturally," she mused, "and fittingly. But so pretty a craft should not go unchristened."

"Your visit christens it, child," earnestly rejoined its master. "Heretofore, its name has seemed to me unimportant. Henceforth, now blessed by your coming, it shall have a name—yours, child—the Lyle Blake—and never shall its name be tarnished. God helping me, it shall not be."

"Oh, Mr. Sourdough, how good you are! I prize the honor. May she ever be as clean as she is this night!" She took his hand and murmured added thanks and acknowledgment.

His graceful tribute and manly resolution, coming so quietly, yet eloquently, from the depths of a lonely

soul, affected her keenly. She could not control her emotion and stood lost of speech.

The scene was dramatic in the extreme, and there was a tug at her heart-strings she had never felt before.

"Heaven guide and keep you," she uttered, haltingly.

The half-hour whistle of the Selkirk sounded in warning that it was soon to cast off and make away.

"Don't leave me, child," he pleaded, brokenly. "Don't go. I cannot bear it."

Painfully suppressing a sob, he took down the guitar and gently begged to hear the old song once more.

Plaintively she sang it—"The Long, Long Trail" —and he, blinded with tears, accompanied her softly on the instrument.

"There's a long, long trail a-winding,
Into the land of my dreams,
Where the nightingale is singing,
And the white moon beams—
There's a long, long night of waiting,
Until my dreams all come true,
'Till the day when I'll be going
Down that long, long trail with you."

At the end of the refrain, she put on her tam o'shanter and, ready to take her leave, hummed sweetly anew, "God be with you 'till we meet again."

The old man dropped the guitar and drooped despairingly. He was again the picture of woe.

"Not that—not that, dear child," he murmured. "It means we should never meet. Help me. I need you so. Let me take you to Fairbanks, if you must go, in this home of mine—your home, my child, dear child of my heart."

She could not withstand his plea and flee.

"Stay, stay," he urged. "You will be as safe as in

God's own hands. I have much to tell you and you shall know it all."

"But my trunk?"

"It will be put off at Dawson and we can pick it up."

Hesitantly, but unalarmed, her answer was given in two sharp whistles of the Selkirk as it put out into the channel and cast its shadow on the gas boat—the newly-christened Lyle Blake—in passing.

Relieved, the old man, his benign counterance now aglow, tenderly bade the girl excuse him and went to the wheel.

She, stout-hearted and unafraid, examined the books and discovered a Bible.

The comfortable boat was following the over-crowded steamer.

It was past midnight. The sleepless sun would soon re-appear.

She was reading a Psalm when the boat rested at anchor and he came in.

"Shall I read to you?" she asked.

"Do, please, dear child."

Not until morning early did she finish the reading.

"Now, draw the blinds and rest, my child," he said as he retired to the engine-room and closed the door.

She was awakened late in the forenoon by the starting of the boat. It was moving slowly.

In the two hours' run before midnight it had made a scant twenty-five miles. He had a double purpose in then tying up. He felt she would sleep the better and he wished her to enjoy the winding in and out of the channel. She should not miss Lake LeBarge, and Thirty Mile River was just ahead.

Upon rising, she was surprised to find that her watch marked the hour of eleven. She thought she had not been asleep more than two hours, but she

was refreshed and as undaunted as if she had sailed on the Selkirk.

"How are you, Mr. Sourdough?" she called, with a tap on the door.

"Never better, child. I'll join you soon."

He stopped the boat presently and came in, smiling.

"You are late for breakfast, child," he greeted her, "but you shall have your eggs and toast in a jiffy."

He turned and lighted an oil stove in the engine-room. She insisted upon helping.

"Not this morning, child," he demurred. "Everything is ready at hand. You may compel me to relinquish the kitchen when you have sampled my cooking. Soft or hard boiled, fried or scrambled, child?"

"Fried and turned soft, if you please, Mr. Sourdough."

"And a bit of bacon," the old man cheerily added.

Her appetite was healthy, accentuated by the odor from the frying-pan.

"You may spread the table, child," he said, handing her a cloth and indicating a covered box and folding chair.

"But you are to breakfast with me?"

"Certainly, child. It is my pleasure."

"You are a real chef, Mr. Sourdough," as he handed her an orange and placed a plate of bacon and eggs before her, with two slices of toast on the side.

"Only an amateur, child—a mere cook in the making."

An aroma of boiling coffee reached her.

"Thoughtful Mr. Sourdough! I love it, but deny myself save in the morning."

"It is well-nigh noon, child. Milk and sugar?"

"Both, please, kind Mr. Sourdough."

"Don't wait on me, child."

"Delicious," she said, beginning.

Completing the service, he drew up a stool and seated himself beside her.

Both ate with a relish. He apologized for the worn and heavy table cutlery.

As she sipped her coffee, he asked if it were too strong. She admitted it was stronger than her mother would permit and was making her tingle. He advised weakening it with another dash of condensed milk. She accepted the advise.

"When shall we reach Dawson?"

"Allowing for a leisurely run, in four days, child. The distance is 367 miles. You are not in haste?"

"No, indeed. You shall teach me to handle the wheel."

"That is my purpose, child, but not until we clear the rapids. These are tortuous waters."

"I trust my Mr. Sourdough."

"You may, child."

"And the rapids—where are they?"

"Five Finger Rapids and Rink Rapids are two hundred miles down. They will thrill you, child."

"I love the thrills."

Thus their table conversation ran. The sample of his cooking did not move her to compel him to relinquish his oil-stove job. She praised him highly. But she claimed the privilege of chefdom at the evening luncheon-dinner and he granted it.

She rose and started to clear off the table. He remonstrated, firmly but gently. The entire breakfast task was his.

"Go out on deck and look at the lake, child," he told her.

She obeyed and took her kodak with her.

The day was glorious and LeBarge a mirror of beauty. Untroubled and innocently unconscious of the anxiety destined to be given others in the changing of her plans, she was glad the Selkirk had steamed on without her. There was time to spare. It would have been disappointing to catch only fleeting glimpses of the upper river scenery. This cozy gas boat seemed especially equipped for an enjoyable trip. She felt signally favored in being the star guest aboard.

Wouldn't her mother be pleased to learn that the handsome little craft had been christened the Lyle Blake? This very afternoon she must write her a long letter and tell her in full detail how it had all come about. Wasn't it a remarkable experience? If she did not actually know it was happening, she herself could not believe it.

How fortunate she was in being able to see the wonderful Northland under such exceptional auspices! Some day she might write a book about it.

And good, kindly Mr. Sourdough—how happy she had made him! She wondered anew why he had chosen a solitary life away off up here. He said he had much to tell her and she should know it all. What could be bearing down so heavily upon the old man's heart?

Her thoughts turned backward in review of incidents of her memorable voyage on the steamship with the Governor's party through the Inside Passage; of her pleasant sojourn at the Territorial capital and her trip up the Lynn Canal and—. Here her train of thought changed. Whenever she came to the Lynn Canal and recalled its gorgeousness, Wayne Roberts was in her mind. They enjoyed it together, and he explained things and talked so entertainingly. He was such a gentleman. She had

thought of him often. Had he given any thoughts to her? She did not know. He had lost his father, also, but not until he was grown, and he loved his mother devotedly, as she loved hers. His must be very proud of him. He was a worker and took such a serious interest in the big problems of life and was so well informed, and different from most young men. She admitted to herself that she admired him greatly. And he had seemed to like her; but this, she sensibly thought, or felt sensible in thinking, might only be because they had been brought together under unusual circumstances on a far-off inland sea. Had he met her in the East, she reasoned, he probably would not have given her a second thought. He might remember her while at Mayo, but soon he would be in New York, or at his old home in Connecticut, where he was going shortly, and it would only be natural for him to forget her. That was the way of the world. Practical in her philosophy, she yet hoped fervently he would not forget her. Should she have sent that little message to him from Whitehorse? It was only a line, saying that she had reached the Yukon Territory and was enjoying herself. He had expressed a desire to hear from her and an intention to return by way of Fairbanks and see her. Certainly he would understand It might be he had written to her. No; he would be too busy in the mines. Possibly she might see him at Dawson. No; if he happened to be there when the steamer came in he might be at the dock, but would never expect her on a gas boat. That was too absurd. For just an instant she wished she were on the Selkirk.

Day-dreaming, she was unaware that Wes Litchfield, sitting inside the door, was watching her in-

tently, too considerate to disturb her reverie. Suddenly she roused and saw him.

"Step out here at once, Mr. Sourdough," she merrily commanded. "I am impatient for a picture and want yours, with a glimpse of LeBarge as perspective."

"Not mine, child!"

"Your very own good self, my Mr. Sourdough and excellent chef."

He was embarrassed and reluctant, but her wish was his wish; his part to comply.

"Aye, aye, child! I shall wear my cap." He donned it.

"I salute you, sir," and she did. "My captain! But still my Mr. Sourdough. Over there, good sir, with face to the sun, and don't blink, please."

He looked a jolly seadog as she adjusted the camera and levelled it at him. His perennial smile had expanded into a grin. He was convulsed. She did not want a funny picture, but a true likeness of her real Mr. Sourdough. Adept in snapshots, she was deliberate and determined upon the right pose and would have none other. He evinced a slight tendency to exaggerate his part, and, though amused, it annoyed her. She almost despaired catching the expression desired.

"Do be natural, Mr. Sourdough," she pleaded, scrutinizing the lense. "I am now going to count three and then snap you."

Her eyes riveted upon the machine, she began humming "The Long, Long Trail." Instantly the grin gave way to the wistful, smiling, benign expression she sought.

"One, two, three"—click.

"Splendid!" she cried. "Now off with the cap. I want another."

The second involved no delay or difficulty. Her recourse to the plaintive air had easily accomplished her ends. She thanked him heartily.

Thereupon he took a picture of the girl, she first drilling him in the manipulation.

Some time had been consumed by their breakfasting, her day-dreaming and the picture-taking. Glancing at his watch, he said:

"Now, child, we must be onward. Hootalinqua is six hours down and we should be beyond before we greet the midnight sun and rest."

He started the engine and took the wheel.

She remained on deck, not in renewed reverie, but absorbed by the odd, snake-like course of the stream, as the sturdy boat wound its way in and out through narrow channels. The current was strong and speed accelerated.

At one of the bends he called to her to look to the far-off right and see the Selkirk. She looked, but could detect only the rising smoke. He called to her again to take his glasses, hanging in the cabin. Through these the steamer was plainly visible and brought close. It had emerged from the tortuous waters into the broader river miles ahead.

Later in the afternoon the Lyle Blake likewise reached the safer passage, when the old man, no longer so keyed in vigilant attention to his duties of navigator, and guiding with one hand, would occasionally turn and say a few words to the girl, who had taken a pad from her suit-case and was dutifully writing to her mother.

After a lapse, with smooth waters offering, he called:

"May I interrupt you, child, for five minutes, and ask you to come to the wheel?"

She responded quickly.

He perched her upon a stool and instructed her to steer a straight course, deviating neither to the left nor right. To do this the wheel must be kept in the exact position as now adjusted and she must not take her eyes off the point directly ahead. Little strength, he added, was required for guidance.

"My first lesson!" she exclaimed, proudly.

She heard him a minute later bustling about and moving something heavy, but did not dare look around. Then there was a loud splash, another and another in the rear. The boat swerved slightly and lifted simultaneously and jarred her hold as it darted forward. Its load was lightened. It had lost some of its cargo.

When he relieved her at the wheel, she noticed that he was perspiring and breathing hard.

"What has my tired Mr. Sourdough been doing?" she asked, solicitously.

"Keeping the boat clean, child, with the aid of my apt and dear little pupil," he said.

He had cast overboard several cases of contraband and could not tell her.

Wes Litchfield was not, literally, a rum-runner or law-breaker for gain. Stimulants meant nothing to him. He practiced total abstince. Taught by the political party to which he belonged before coming to Alaska to hate "Old Sumptuary," his hatred endured, but the Volstead Act did not affect him personally and he was indifferent toward it. His habits, except for indulgence in games of chance, were above reproach. Otherwise he had led a singularly blameless life in this far-away land. But an obliging disposition often induced him for the sake of friends, without compunctions of conscience, to trifle with the law. Off in the hills they were making moonshine, a deadly concoction, to assuage their appetite,

and when he was setting off on periodical pilgrimages up the river they entreated him to bring them a supply of the real whisky. Repeatedly he favored them, always unconscious that he was establishing an ill-reputation.

One cannot long cover such iniquities in Alaska. Litchfield, in fact, never seriously tried. Consignments of forbidden liquor were easily obtainable, and his transactions were almost openly carried on. But a disquieting hint at Whitehorse aroused his apprehension. He was under surveillance and likely to be overhauled at Eagle, or farther down the river. Under the spell of the girl he became acutely fearful and conscience-stricken. Not for the world would he be accused in her presence and bring shame upon her. His promise to keep the boat clean and her reading of the scriptures had quickened his better senses, and he hated the cases of whisky aboard as he had previously hated "Old Sumptuary."

His boyhood training came back to him. He remembered the teachings of godly, law-abiding folks. In the long ago he had said a nightly prayer at his mother's knee, and later been blessed by a happy marriage. He had erred, tragically, and come to this strange, alluring country to forget. The past was dead, but it returned vividly. He lay awake for hours, pondering deeply. The coming into his life of the girl had given him a re-birth. Already he was a different man. He saw aright. For over two decades off in the wilderness a craving of his heart had gone unsatisfied. Now love and trust had miraculously been given him and should not, by any chance, be snatched from him. The thought of exposure as a law-breaker was harrowing. He magnified his danger and dreaded reaching Dawson, lest something happen to disclose his guilt and lose her com-

panionship. Smaller ports, across the border, could safely be passed at seasonable hours, but not Dawson—

> "Where modern ideas and modern ways
> Have replaced the life of the border days."

He had dealt faro there in Klondike times and was still well remembered. The town was decaying and presented only a pathetic suggestion of its former self, but old cronies survived and some by noisy hail might humiliate him. Possibly his boat would be searched. The girl would be found with him and he would be unable to explain. His fears, real and fancied, multiplied. He had met difficult situations, many times, and been unconcerned. Then as a man he dealt with men and was unafraid. Now, a sacred guardianship of his seeking imposed upon him, he was in trepidation and alarm. The thought of forfeiting her confidence and losing the "child," as he ever called her, sent terror to his heart. For the contraband, he did not care. It had cost a pretty penny, but he could dispense with it handily without the slightest regret. His neighbors down the river would be disappointed, but better off, and he would not miss the money paid.

But what could be done about her trunk? He had told her they could "pick it up" at Dawson. Identifying it, spelled embarrassment, if not peril. He was so well known. Protection of the girl and retention of her trust were imperative.

His conscience pricked him for a further deception practiced. He had not mailed the girl's letters at Whitehorse! They reposed in his pocket. He, in evasion, had told her a positive untruth when she questioned him and he said, "Your Mr. Sourdough never forgets." Deliberately, he had refrained from mailing the letters. He was then resolved to take

her on a long journey and thus sought to keep her out of communication with friends. It was a mistake. He deplored it keenly. She would be located, of course, and his ill-considered act would produce anxiety and distress and avail nothing in the end. Intending to make amends, he had said that night, in pleading with her, that he had "much to tell" and she should "know it all." He meant not only a clean breast of this deception, but to unfold to her his life's story, concealing nothing. She inspired his faith. He needed her sympathy and understanding, and prized her love. He had been honest in promising to get her trunk at Dawson and take her to Fairbanks. Could he keep his word? It meant separation and would break his heart. But he was deceiving her. Utterly miserable and repentant, undecided what to do, strong in impulse, but weak and hesitant, he slept only to dream of his predicament and start up in affright.

Yet, in the morning, he had cheerily responded to her knock at the door, happily prepared her breakfast, animatedly enjoyed the picture-taking and been his placid, benign self; and, subsequently, in perfect composure, by clever pretext, thrown the liquor overboard and thus relieved himself of one of his burdens. Such was the composite character of this frontiersman, boating down the silent Yukon with the unsuspecting girl!

Thirty Mile River soon was passed, and during the afternoon he again summoned her to the wheel while he improvised a line and hook and trolled for salmon. Expert at the catch, his task was difficult, as fish were not running. Presently he captured one and deftly dressed it for dinner, she, meantime, alert to navigation, but eagerly expectant.

"Now, child," he said upon relieving her, "I sur-

render the kitchen and leave the evening menu to you."

"Wonderful Mr. Sourdough!" she exclaimed. "We shall surely have a feast."

He had arranged the utensils and put canned goods within reach, and she proceeded to make ready the meal as a good mother and a term at boarding school had taught her. It enabled her to inspect the larder, and she was amazed at its abundant contents. Everything was to be had a normal appetite could relish, and dainties were not lacking.

She remonstrated when he wanted to stop the wheel and help her, and merrily rejoined:

"Stick to your post, Mr. Sourdough, and give the child a chance."

When, at anchor, they sat at the miniature, neatly-appointed table, a flower plucked near shore at Le-Barge adorning the center, he, more benign than ever, pronounced the salmon and accompaniments "delicious" and the tea better than the coffee he had made, she, flushed with pride, was very happy.

Fast headway was made toward Hootalinqua, at the mouth of the Teslin River, during the long daylight evening, while the girl, sitting out on the deck, brought her diary up to date with enthusiastic chroniclings in which she declared she was having the most enchanting time of her life.

Within sight of the village, in an attractive harbor on the opposite side of the stream, he stopped the engine and joined her to commune with the glorious midnight sun.

The winding in and out of the channel earlier in the day had been full of charm and thrills, but this tranquil, reposeful scene, as the brilliant orb receded in seeming reluctance and dropped below the horizon for a short interval, to re-appear with brighter

luster, overwhelmed her. It was too marvelous for speech. She watched it in silence. He, in supreme and affectionate joy, watching her, shared the wonders of the night.

Returning to the cabin, she took the Bible and opening it at random read to him Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Whether absorbed in the reading or in his troubled thoughts, only God could tell.

Then, with a "good-night, child," he retired to the engine-room to lay awake and ponder poignantly.

CHAPTER XI.

DOWN THE MIGHTY YUKON

ON THE second day after leaving Whitehorse the Lyle Blake made a fast run of twelve hours and reached the rapids—Five Finger and Rink—in the early evening.

En route, at the Tantalus coal mine, where a barge was loading lignite, the workers waved a greeting, and at Carmack's, named in honor of the discoverer of the Klondike, a lonely man on shore hailed the boat and asked to be taken to the Pelly River at old Selkirk, six hours below.

Litchfield was inclined to object, but, at the girl's intercession, permitted him to come aboard.

He was a placer miner, a rugged character of few words, who knew every crook and turn of the river and at once sought a hand at the wheel. His fair fellow-passenger endeavored to draw him into conversation, but he was embarrassed and uncommunicative. She proffered him a sandwich, which he accepted and ate quickly, though declaring he was not hungry. He carried a supply of hardtack.

Litchfield, after a long day, starting immediately after breakfast, smiled wearily in an attempt to conceal his fatigue, and the girl, noting his somewhat haggard appearance, had vainly asked to relieve him and urged him to rest. He was bent upon making time, however, and had his way. Kindly and benign as ever, but less cheery, it was evident he was overtaxing himself.

The presence of the unobtrusive stranger was unwelcome to the old man, who, while extending the helping hand, nevertheless looked at him askance.

The rapids were near and he had anticipated the thrills they would give the "child" and was disappointed that he could not now share the wonders with her alone. Moreover, the warning given him at Whitehorse and solicitude for her had made him morbid and suspicious.

Learning from the stranger that he had often steered a boat through these difficult waters and with never a mishap, she finally went to the old man at the wheel with this appeal:

"Do, please, my tired Mr. Sourdough, give the man a chance. He can handle the boat safely."

"After a while, child."

"No; now," she persisted. "Be a good Mr. Sourdough."

He hesitated, looking down upon her tenderly, with a forced smile, as he manipulated the wheel with one hand.

"Come out on deck," she pleaded, "and I shall sing to my poor Mr. Sourdough."

This was irresistible. Instantly he became obedient.

"Bless you, child—tell him to come," he said, brightening.

The stranger needed no instruction. He was unlicensed, but an expert pilot, and took the wheel with confidence. The old man saw he could be trusted and followed the girl. At her request he brought his guitar.

As the swift-moving craft approached the rapids his weariness and worries and heart aches vanished as he listened to her singing and thumped pleasing accompaniment on the instrument. The trail song he loved so well coming first, she sang in turn, "Old Black Joe," "My Old Kentucky Home," "Down on the Suwanee River," "Maryland, My Maryland,"

"Marching Through Georgia," and "Dixie," and then such melodies as "Over There," "Keep the Home Fires Burning," "It's a Long Way to Tipperrary," "Pack Up Your Troubles in the Old Kit Bag," and in French "Jeanne d'Arc." She knew the words of all these, being especially familiar with the modern war airs because of her Red Cross work. He was all happiness for the charmful hour, with not a care in the world.

As a finale, saying it was another of her favorites and thinking of her mother, she sang "On the Banks of the Wabash."

"Splendid, splendid! child," he exclaimed. "It is, also, a favorite of mine. I hold it next to 'My Alaska.' Do you know it?"

She was unfamiliar with the words of the Territorial song, which is sung to the tune of "My Maryland," but eager to learn. He recited the words of the chorus, and she sang it.

Entering the rapids, beginning the winding in and out of this tortuous passage, the programme ended and music was forgotten.

He went forward and stood beside the stranger at the wheel to be sure of no error in guidance, and she, lost in wonder, stood and watched the panoramic scene in enjoyment of the thrills. At points and turns the stream was very narrow and she could almost touch shore.

Presently, convinced that the strange pilot needed no assistance, the old man rejoined her and explained that once through these Five Fingers they would quickly reach Rink Rapids, equally thrilling, six miles ahead. He told her how he had once in his boat followed a steamer winding through, and the sight was interesting.

She, speechless, listened and watched, alert not to miss anything.

After half an hour's interval, the experience was repeated, more briefly, in the succeeding torrents, and the staunch craft, perfectly handled, then reached the straighter and broader channel.

Litchfield, in a transformed state of mind, now entertained no resentment of the stranger, but felt grateful for the respite his presence had given, and thanked him heartily.

It was nine-thirty o'clock and, as the current was still running strong, the former Hudson Bay fort, Selkirk, where Indian troubles often occurred in ancient days, could be reached after midnight and the stranger put ashore. Therefore, it was decided to push onward. The girl made coffee and served a late luncheon.

As the night was not so clear, or the descending sun so glorious, she subsequently employed her time with her diary and in reading. Once she went on deck, where the stranger was secluding himself, and endeavored anew to converse with him. He was amiable, but taciturn.

"How long have you been 'in'?" she asked in the stereotyped fashion of addressing pioneers, or prospectors.

"Oh, I've been 'in' so long I don't care a"——. He was about to say "damn" and haltingly said "rap."

She laughed and further inquired:

"And you've never been 'out'?"

"Couldn't never get 'out,' " he answered. "Tried for a long time, but couldn't save my money, and now I don't want to go. It's no use."

"Too bad. Where did you come from?"

"No; it ain't so bad. Nobody'd know me and I

couldn't be satisfied away from these parts. I come from Tacoma."

She succeeded in eliciting that he was a stampeder of '98, but nothing more. He answered in monosyllables, or evaded answering. So she went indoors and resumed her book.

Midnight and one o'clock had passed when old Selkirk, asleep, was seen and reached. Not a soul was astir, not a craft in harbor or a sign of life on the dock. It was daylight, the sun shining brightly, but it was night there and along the Yukon, nevertheless.

The stranger clumsily removed his hat when the girl bade him good-bye and wished him luck, but withheld his hand, saying, "It's dirty, miss."

He beckoned aside the old man, who had come from the engine-room, and offered to pay his passage, which was refused, with assurance that he had amply earned it in good service rendered at the wheel. Then in an undertone, as he stepped ashore, he told Litchfield to be on his guard—that the authorities were after him. He had heard it at the Tantalus coal mine.

Secrets will leak in Alaska.

Wes Litchfield was abstracted when the girl, waiting for him, read from the Bible as usual. When she finished he said, "Good-night, child," and retired to the engine-room, not to bed, but to the wheel. Dawson was 178 miles down. He must make and so shape time as not to be seen there, or at Eagle, 102 miles farther, across the border line. Beyond he felt he would be out of danger. He could not pick up the trunk at Dawson. That was out of the question.

He was better off at the wheel than abed, for he could not sleep for his fears and troubled conscience.

She slept soundly, unconscious that the boat was

constantly under way, and did not rise until late in the forenoon. Asking his pardon for the delayed breakfast, which she hurriedly prepared, even then he was reluctant to stop the motor. He ate with scant appetite; was very tired, and again his smile was forced.

She insisted that he give her the wheel and he take a rest, but he dissented with, "Not now, child."

Though kindly, he was not her real Mr. Sourdough and the fact pained her. Insistent upon relieving him, or that he put in ashore for a few hours, he gently, but firmly, repeated, "Not now, child."

Remaining within hearing distance, as the boat proceeded, she asked him questions and said things intended to cheer him, and hummed the airs he liked. He answered pleasantly and thanked her, but was weary and distraught.

They passed the White and Stewart Rivers, flowing into the Yukon ten miles apart, and when he told her the name of the latter she recalled that Wayne Roberts had said he would go up the Stewart River in reaching Mayo and this recollection started a train of thought about him. She wondered what he would think, if he knew she were making this strange journey in the sole company of a fatherly old man whom she had known only a week, and whether Wayne had enjoyed his trip through the rapids as she had enjoyed hers. No, he could not have seen them as advantageously and intimately from the steamer. Only a gas boat could give the fullness of the thrills. She would tell him all about her wonderful experience when she saw him. But would she ever seen him again? He might have forgotten her already. True, he said he was coming to Fairbanks to see her—and said it earnestly—but he might be summoned back East, and men often said things they

did not actually mean. She could not believe Wayne Roberts one of that type. He was different. She hoped he was succeeding in his work. He was so interested in it and so enthusiastic over the prospects at Mayo. She could hardly realize that they were so near one another—he only up the Stewart River 150 miles, or so. Of course, she would not see him at Dawson. He could not have been at Mayo more than ten days, and would not so soon have business at Dawson. It was idle to expect to see him. How could they, by any possibility, meet when she was traveling on a gas boat?

She had not caught a glimpse of a dozen human beings all the way from Whitehorse, counting the men at the coal mine and the stranger picked up at Carmack's and put off at Selkirk. What a very lonesome land! She had not thought about it heretofore, being so absorbed in the wonders, but now, for the moment, she was overwhelmed with its loneliness. How queer she should in this manner be going down the great Yukon and in a foreign territory! Who would have dreamed it? It was unreal. She would be glad when the speedy boat, the Lyle Blake, crossed over into Alaska. She loved Alaska. You could hardly tell the Yukon Territory and Alaska apart, but Alaska belonged to America and she should feel more like herself in American waters and on American soil.

Unafraid—"as safe as in God's own hands"—he had told her, she wondered what had come over Mr. Sourdough and why he was in such a hurry. Her school did not open for over a month. There was plenty of time and he should not be tiring himself out. He was too old to go without rest. She must reason with him tonight, after she had read to him, and endeavor to amend his ways.

Possibly it might be well, after all, when she got off at Dawson for her trunk, to wait there for a steamer down the river to Tanana, as she had contemplated. But how could she explain to the good old man who called her "child" and had been so kind? She wished fervently that she might meet Wayne Roberts. He would know how to advise her. And she gave a farewell glance at the Stewart River in thinking of him.

"You may take the wheel now, child," called her Mr. Sourdough, as he slackened speed, rousing her out of her reflections, "and I will rest a bit and get the dinner."

Dawson was seventy miles down and the daylight night was coming.

Engrossed in running the boat, scrupulously attentive to her duty, her misgivings disappeared and she was content and happy. The changing scenery was not thrilling, but held her interest. She guided the craft straight ahead, keeping her eyes fixed upon a point far in the distance, as directed. Occasionally she heard him breathing hard and was pleased. Poor old man! He was worn out. She hoped he would sleep on and forget the dinner. He needed rest. She was not hungry. Why bother about eating? The wheel was more interesting. If he would only surrender it to her oftener, she would enjoy the trip the more. Why did not women learn motor-boating and adopt piloting as a profession and become licensed? Perhaps some did. She did not know.

Reared in the inland country, her experience before coming to the coast had been confined to canoeing on the Wabash and Lake Maxinkuckee, an excursion on Lake Michigan and a few boat rides on the Columbia in Oregon; but she loved the water. How readily she had learned to run the Lyle Blake!

It was a real accomplishment. How proud her mother would be! And—if she should ever seen him again—she should tell Wayne Roberts. He, too, would be pleased, she felt. Wouldn't it be splendid, if their paths should cross at Dawson? How far ahead was Dawson? She had not the remotest idea. The old man had said it was four days from Whitehorse, allowing for a leisurely run. But the run had not been leisurely these past twenty-four hours. He had seemed bent upon making time. Where were they now? She wondered, and smiled at her wondering. It was all Greek to her—distances and localities along the river. She could only measure time by Dawson. Whether they were averaging twelve knots or only eight knots she had no means of knowing. He kept no log and there was no guide-book aboard. If she were a regular navigator, she should learn all these things, but it was sufficient that the master of the craft knew everything.

Dear, kind old man! Why had she been so foolish as to distrust him, even for a moment? She was absolutely safe. The long days were fleeting. Too soon her destination would be reached. She would then resume the engaging hum-drum of school life and the Yukon be only a delightful memory. She might never see the great river again, as she would go out by the new railroad.

Thus her thoughts ran while otherwise preoccupied in guiding the boat, its speed accelerated by the current, through the broad, smooth channel.

Suddenly she espied a man on the shore to the right, several hundred yards away, signalling with his arm and hat. He was endeavoring to attract attention. A village was just beyond. She was on the point of calling her Mr. Sourdough, though unwill-

ing to disturb his slumber, when he, smiling, joined her, his benign self once more.

Before relieving her, observing the signalling, he took his glass and looked.

"Let me take the wheel, child," he said, "and I shall see what he wants."

She, surrendering it regretfully, busied herself with preparations for dinner, while he, slowing down, guided the boat close to shore.

The man, not unlike the stranger picked up at Carmack's, but better dressed, stepped aboard the rear deck, and Wes Litchfield shook hands with him. They conferred in an undertone. The girl saw, but did not hear. In a few minutes, the conference ended, they shook hands in parting, the man jumped ashore and the boat proceeded.

A second warning to be on guard had been given Wes Litchfield.

Intuitively conscious that the hurried words exchanged were disquieting and full of meaning, the girl's curiosity was aroused.

Presently, in passing the small community on the opposite shore, she called:

"I'll trade the kitchen for the wheel, Mr. Sourdough. The repast is under way."

"In half an hour, child," he answered. "The dinner will wait."

"As you will," she rejoined, and added: "What, pray, is the village? May it please my good Mr. Sourdough to tell?"

"Orgilvie; but hamlet rather than village," he called back pleasantly. "It has a bit of history of which you shall hear."

Exact as to interval, in half an hour, almost to the minute, he brought the boat to halt for the late evening meal. He was contrite and apologetic for not

serving as chef, having slept too long and been delayed by the interruption ashore. She assured him he had rested a scant two hours and that her appetite had not suffered.

His gentleness was marked and sincere, but she felt that his animated air was assumed. Behind it she could detect worry and preoccupation. He looked better, but his natural placidity was gone.

It did not occur to him until reminded to give her the bit of promised history about Orgilvie.

"Really, my child," he said in his fatherly way, "it is a lonesome little place, historically unimportant and unknown to fame. Indeed, it has not invariably been honored with a place on the map. But its environs along the shore are attractive, as you have seen, and once—some ten years ago—a scene was witnessed near here that has become traditional in the annals of Orgilvie. Two river steamers, whether bound up or down the Yukon, I do not now recall, stopped by evident pre-arrangement in close proximity and their passengers, some most oddly costumed, disembarked and participated in an inexplicable ceremony. An intelligent native concealed in the vicinity watched it in mystification. Strange rites were performed. He could hear the names Juneau and Seetka solemnly spoken. A berobed magistrate, awe-inspiring and majestic, read an impressive catechism. Bedecked youths danced about, strewing fire-weed and wild flowers. A march was sung or chanted. Processions formed and dignitaries escorted the queerly-garbed participants back to the boats, which quickly departed, one following the other.

"Natives are superstitious, and this particular native, the eye-witness, became paralyzed with fright by the spectacle presented. His legs could scarcely carry him with the tale of the mysterious happening,

which produced mild consternation in the quiet community and is talked about even to this day."

The old man paused to sip his coffee, but the girl, greedy for the rest of the story, would not have it so.

"Go on, go on, dear Mr. Sourdough. And then what?" She could not bear the suspense.

"Patience, patience, dear child," he enjoined. "You shall hear."

Enjoying her eagerness, he protracted it until he finished his coffee.

"It was more than a seven days' wonder for Orgilvie," he resumed, "and many of the community jeered at the frightened native and declared he had imbibed moonshine or been dreaming. Others credited him, as his reputation was good, and theorized that a new cult, possibly under the ban in the Dominion and the States, had been organized in this out-of-the-way place. The fact was well established that two steamers had stopped and tarried at the time and place. This required no corroboration. The native had not exclusively observed the landing. Cut off from communication, with vessels coming irregularly, the solution of the mystery was delayed for many days. Meanwhile, Orgilvie was left agog and overwrought. It could not take up its even tenor until it knew and understood."

"Yes, yes!" exclaimed the girl. "I see, I see! But do, please, my story-telling Mr. Sourdough, hurry the elucidation."

"Possess yourself, dear child," he said, as he playfully hesitated, not interested by one-half in Orgilvie and its exciting ordeal as in the girl so eager and expectant. But, too kindly to prolong her anxiety, he reached the climax quickly:

"It developed that a large party of tourists, made

up at Seattle, I believe, had chartered the two steamers for a comprehensive tour of the Yukon and were traveling on their own schedule. They were congenial and merry, and were frequently united on their long journey by a joint landing to promote their pleasure. Sometimes the taking on of wood provided the opportunity. A mock-wedding was contrived by fun-making souls aboard the vessel, and Orgilvie was chosen as the scene. A portly manufacturer became the buxom bride called Juneau, and a diminutive young Frenchman the shrinking groom called Sitka. Grotesquely-garbed bridesmaids and ushers and flower-girls gave spectacularism to the travesty, and a real jurist, facetious when off duty, performed the ridiculous ceremony. The 'I, Juneau, take thee Seetka, and 'I, Seetka,' as he pronounced it, 'take thee Juneau,' forming a part of the mock nuptials, especially excited the eavesdropper's wonderment and superstition. The steward of one of the steamers subsequently disclosed at Orgilvie, as well as all along the upper river, the details of the mirth-making event, and it still lives."

The girl thought it must have been "excruciatingly funny" and he agreed with her heartily. He added that he had heard recently that the groom of the ludicrous occasion, the young Frenchman, had lost his life fighting for his country in the war with Germany.

It was now 10 o'clock, with the sun still brightly ascendant, and the old man volunteered, to her delight, to give her another hour at the wheel, but suggested that the nightly reading come first. She assented and read from the Psalms earnestly. He listened attentively.

Starting the engine, he regulated the wheel and left her in charge of it. There was no life in sight.

The way was clear. She, careful as always, found renewed joy in the work, and her reflections were cheerful; he, tense and disturbed, examined papers and sat out on the deck engrossed with doubts and fears and plans.

"Now, child, to rest," he said, resuming the wheel. "You have earned sweet dreams. May you sleep well!" He spoke with tenderness and solicitude.

"Good-night, my captain! But do not be my overworked Mr. Sourdough," she answered.

She slept soundly—so soundly as to be unaware that the motor never missed a stroke. The old man was cautiously pushing fast ahead. He had planned it out. Dawson must be reached and passed after midnight or thereabout without her knowledge. Keeping close to the opposite shore, running stealthily, he was soon beyond the erstwhile Klondyke metropolis, which was in repose and river men asleep. The Lyle Blake was well toward Forty Mile before the motor halted.

Her trunk had been left behind.

CHAPTER XII.

CONSCIENCE STRICKEN AND REMORSEFUL

UNAWARE that Dawson had been reached and passed, Lyle Blake slept late the morning after. She was hastening breakfast when Litchfield guided the boat to the south shore and stopped it.

He was worn and tired. His smile was wan. Deceit was bearing down heavily upon him. He ate sparingly and looked at her appealingly. The old man's soul was racked. Soon she must know, and would she forgive and trust him anew? He realized the futility of his conduct. Her unmailed letters burned in his pocket. His conscience smote him. He was ashamed and repentent.

His haggard appearance excited her sympathy and concern.

"Why! why! tired Mr. Sourdough," she exclaimed, "did you not call me to relieve you at the wheel?"

"You needed your sleep, child," he answered. "I shall rest now."

She inquired where they were. He said they had passed Forty Mile half an hour ago. It was the truth, but unenlightening to her. She had never heard of Forty Mile.

"If you cannot trust me with the wheel, dear Mr. Sourdough," she expostulated, "why not take our time? Dawson will wait."

"We shall, child," he said, abstractedly, turning away to conceal his guilt.

As she cleared the table she remarked that his cup of coffee was untouched. He explained that he feared it would keep him awake. She urged him to

rest at once, but he demurred. He must first go ashore with her. She could spend the forenoon on land and he would sleep. He suggested that she take a book, but she elected her diary, as she had many things to put therein.

The day was bright and warm, and the landing a pretty spot. He had chosen it with care.

Tenderly assisting her to alight, he brought a folding chair and placed it securely. She might take a little ramble, he said, but should not venture out of sight of the boat. She promised to keep within easy reach and he assured her that he always slept with an eye and ear open.

There was no life on the river or sign of habitation on land. The aspect would have been melancholy but for the brightness of the cloudless sky and the fireweed flaming everywhere. She communed with nature and was care-free. Stunted cottonwood trees relieved the barren waste. The warmth of the sun comforted her. She did not crave shade. To her cheery spirit the silence was not oppressive. The solitude charmed her and she was unafraid.

She rambled far enough to gather a few wild flowers and get her bearings. Then she took the seat and resumed in her diary the record of her experiences. Incidents and impressions innumerable were set down and, book on her knee, she kept her fountain pen busy for an hour. She omitted nothing that would aid in keeping her memorable journey fresh and vivid in years to come. A description in detail of the boat, a character sketch of her Mr. Sourdough, and bits of conversation were chronicled. She knew her dear mother and the good folks at home would be delighted to know everything. Incidentally, she pictured the glories of Alaska, forgetting as she wrote that she was on the alien soil of Yukon

Territory. Compressing her chirography to fit diminutive pages, she filled several of them.

Her diary thus brought up to date, she made a head-rest of the folding chair and lay on the ground and indulged in day-dreaming, shielding her eyes with her cap. She thought of Fairbanks and felt she should love that far-off town. Everybody spoke so heartily of Fairbanks. She recalled that the Governor had said it was the most hospitable and kindly community he had ever visited. How pleased she should be to greet him there! Wouldn't it be splendid to teach Alaska children? She would try so hard to win and hold them. Most teachers who came to Alaska soon married, everybody told her. She was not seeking a husband and would be an exception. Matrimony was not remotely involved in any of her plans. She was heart-free and meant to remain so. But—Wayne Roberts came into mind. She was honest with herself and admitted that, after all, she was not altogether heart-free. When absorbed in her diary she had thought of him and wondered whether he would be interested in her experiences. Would he keep his promise to come to Fairbanks to see her? How proud she should be to introduce such a fine young man to her new-made friends! It was too much to expect. He had big work in hand and might already have forgotten her. Of course, she would not see him at Dawson. It was idle to think of it. But, in blissful ignorance that Dawson had been reached and passed, she did think of it and hoped to see him there.

A whistle aroused her. Her Mr. Sourdough was out on deck and summoning her. She glanced at her wrist watch. Noontime had come and gone. It was almost one o'clock.

"Lunch is ready, child," he called, and he came for the chair and assisted her aboard.

Refreshed, he was more like his benign self and displayed a better appetite. But he was still preoccupied and troubled.

Eagle, the Northeastern port of entry to Alaska, was a few hours' ahead, and the customs officer was usually wide-awake and vigilant. He had been instructed, Litchfield feared, to be on the lookout for the gas boat and its cargo of bonded liquor. To outwit him would not be as easy as slipping through Dawson. His actual purpose in stopping during the forenoon was not to rest, but to time arrival at Eagle late at night. He had slept only an hour.

She asked at the table when they would reach Dawson and how long they would probably remain.

"I am unable to say now, child, but can tell you tomorrow," he answered, evasively.

"And good Mr. Sourdough is to trust me with the wheel this afternoon?"

"Tomorrow, child," he said. "We are not starting until evening." And he went to the motor and busied himself examining it to escape further questioning.

Fortune had favored him and the danger of falling into the hands of the mounted police was virtually gone. Miraculously, almost without precedent, he had eluded these vigilant and dependable Yukon agents at their stations along the way. Within a few hours he would be across the border in Alaska, where the river was unguarded and official surveillance negligible. Once beyond Eagle he would have nothing to fear.

But he was remorseful, dejected and forlorn. The reaction following his safe passage through Dawson had brought him to the verge of collapse.

Sitting in the engine-room, ostensibly studying the

motor, his troubled thoughts overwhelmed him. He cursed his folly and deceit. Momentarily, he was moved to cry out to the girl for forgiveness. He had told her she would be "as safe as in God's own hands." Truly, he would protect her with his life. But, foolishly, unnecessarily, he had exposed her to humiliation, possible detention. His clearance papers as to cargo, including the now discarded cases of whisky, were flawless, but he had certified—truthfully then—that he was the sole occupant of the boat. He had violated the Canadian law by carrying the girl as a passenger without notifying the authorities. The regulation was very strict. It exacted the identity of every such traveler. Had the boat been examined at LeBarge, Hootalinque, Carmack, Selkirk, Orgilvie, or Dawson, the disclosure of her presence would have subjected him to severe penalty. She would have been held, temporarily, at least, and the episode officially heralded all along the upper river. He had been acutely conscious of the risks involved and peril invited from the time they left Whitehorse. For his own safety he was unconcerned, but for the beloved girl his solicitude was intense. Not for the world would he bring sorrow to her. Fear of losing her had robbed him of his senses. He had realized when too late to turn back the utter futility of his conduct and its unfairness toward her. How could he explain and not forfeit her respect and confidence? He was miserable, despondent and despised himself. His pricking conscience prompted him to tell her all and beg for mercy, but he was cringing and afraid.

"Is something wrong with the engine, Mr. Sourdough?" asked the girl, who was reading.

"Nothing serious, child," he answered. "It will be all right by evening."

She insisted that her weary Mr. Sourdough, while giving the motor a rest, himself take a rest, and, yielding, he closed the door separating them. For a brief interval she could hear him moving about. Then there was silence broken by his heavy breathing.

While he slept, losing interest in her book, she became restless and went ashore and rambled about, keeping within easy reach of the boat. She saw a salmon jump in the water and wished she had asked the old man to equip her to fish. Presently she sat on a rock near a tree where there was an unobstructed view of the environment on both sides of the river. She was very wide-awake and alert to everything. The slightest rustle or sound was discernible because of the solitude.

A strange animal, larger than a squirrel and bushy, emerged from somewhere and ran awkwardly past the tree. It startled her. Intuitively she was on her feet and seized a stick. She had never seen such a queer creature, not even in a zoo or menagerie. It offered no battle, but disappeared instantly. She did not resume her seat. If any other living things were to be encountered, although she was not nervous, she preferred to be in position of defense. She was in her hiking costume, with stout, high-top shoes. As Alaska had no snakes, she assured herself that the Yukon was similarly favored and free. She always shuddered at the thought of snakes, even the harmless garter variety abounding in her home State. Mr. Sourdough would know, no doubt, the identity of the clumsy feathered thing that had crossed her path. He seemed to know everything.

As the afternoon shortened and the serenity on land was not further disturbed, she gave renewed attention to the river and went to the bank to scan

it searchingly. She marvelled that it was devoid of traffic. What a lonesome waterway! She had once seen the Mississippi below Cairo. It was alive with boats and rafts. But there was population along its shore. This was an uninhabited land. Wayne Roberts had said that there were not 5,000 people in the whole of the Yukon Territory, and the majority of these were in the mining districts about Dawson and Mayo. She wondered how he was succeeding in his work at Mayo and when he would come to Fairbanks. Her thoughts centered in the young man as she strolled along the river.

She almost strained her eyes in quest of a sign of life on the mighty water. Finally her intensive search was rewarded. In the dim distance above, just around the bend, she detected a small craft. It was a mere speck, but she fancied she heard its motor. Soon it would come into plainer view. No; it was not moving. She was certain it had not been there earlier in the day. Its size seemed to increase as she watched it. No longer was it a mere speck. But it was not moving. She would inspect it more closely through her Mr. Sourdough's glasses when he awoke. It occurred to her that he was having a prolonged sleep. This pleased her. He needed it so. Poor old man! He was worn out. Why had he not allowed her to help him at the wheel?

Glancing at her watch, she was surprised that it indicated five o'clock. How quickly the afternoon had slipped away Perhaps she should awaken him. She would prepare dinner first, if she could, but the oil stove was in the engine-room. Hesitant, she decided not to call him until six.

She went aboard quietly. From the deck she again looked up the river. The craft was still there. It had not moved.

Noiselessly entering the cabin, he simultaneously opened the door and greeted her.

"You have had a pleasant afternoon, child?" he inquired.

He still carried a crest-fallen air unnatural to him.

"Particularly pleasant in the thought that my tired Mr. Sourdough was obtaining a needed sleep," she answered. "Have you rested well?"

"Quite, my child," he said. "Be not concerned about me."

She took his field glasses hanging in the corner and remarked that there was a small boat at anchor up the river. His abstraction vanished at once. He scented danger and was apprehensive as he followed her out. She adjusted the glasses, which brought the craft into distinct and intimate view, but revealed no steam or sign of life aboard. Apparently its occupants were sleeping or had landed.

"Let me see, child."

She gave him the glasses and he looked steadfastly. Then, without comment on the craft, he suggested that she prepare dinner and he would push along.

She lighted the fire and put the coffee pot on as he started the motor and took the wheel. The Lyle Blake proceeded slowly, keeping close to the left shore.

Thinking he was pursued, Litchfield was all but stampeded by fear. He had not intended starting for an hour. Eagle, he estimated, was forty-five miles ahead. To reach there before midnight would be hazardous. One o'clock would be safer, as at Dawson. But, if the boat at anchor was watching and following him, he must meet any risk. He was determined not to be overhauled.

He asked the girl not to wait for him. She de-

clined to eat alone and urged him to come to the table. After fifteen minutes, he consented and stopped the boat. But he first took the precaution to look through the glasses. The craft was no longer in sight. He was relieved, but still fearful.

She thought the meal would tempt his appetite, but she was disappointed. He was gentle as ever, and smiled upon her benignly, but spoke only when spoken to and ate little. He was engrossed in bitter reflections and speculating upon the night. In Alaska he would be secure, but if the Yukon authorities had notified the customs officer at Eagle of his approach it would be extremely difficult to cross the boundary line undetected. He nervously exaggerated his danger.

She roused him by telling of the odd creature she had seen ashore and asked what it could have been.

He questioned her as to its appearance and she said it was "thick and fat, with short legs, and seemed to have feathers instead of fur."

"A porcupine, child—undoubtedly a porcupine," he laughed. "You will see many of the tribe up here."

She had read about this queer animal of the rodent family, but forgotten his characteristics. Would he bite? And did he shoot his quills? She pressed for knowledge and was enlightened fully.

Mr. Sourdough had seen hundreds of porcupines. They were common on the trails and considered harmless. He had known dogs to come to grief fighting them, but had never heard of a porcupine attacking a man. Inherently they were timid. They were troublesome to handle because of their thorn-like quills and long, sharp teeth. As for shooting their quills, he thought it a myth. They were protected under the game law—for what purpose, he did not

know—but it was permissible to kill them for food.

"Ugh!" shuddered the girl. "You mean to say, Mr. Sourdough, that people actually eat porcupines?"

"It is not a popular repast, child, but decidedly a Lucullus feast under stress of hunger. It has saved many a frontiersman from starvation. Taste then requires no cultivation. To me the meat is unpalatable. It has the quality of stringy pork. Others will tell you that it is as sweet and tender as roast pig."

The singular creature, he said, usually kept in hiding during the day, but was often seen in the mid-Summer season when there was no night. It subsisted chiefly upon the barks of trees. He had heard that on the Valdez trail the porcupine had fairly eaten away small bridges, or materially damaged them, and that trail-blazers had been directed to exterminate the devastating little animal as a public nuisance. But he advised that this story be accepted with reservation. Personally he had seen no bridge thus gnawed and undermined.

"How interesting!" exclaimed the girl. "I must mention this in my diary." And subsequently she did.

Again the old man took his glasses and went on deck. There was nothing in sight. It was seven o'clock and another hour could be spared. A continuous run with the current, starting at eight, would bring him to Eagle at the safest time.

He suggested their nightly Bible reading. Tomorrow she would be given the wheel. Tonight she should have a long rest to equip her for her day's duty as pilot.

He listened attentively to the reading. Again she selected a Psalm. It was from his old and worn Bible that she read. It bore the faded inscription, dated many years ago, "To my beloved son, Harry,"

and signed "Mother." Harry was not his name, and she wished to know the history of the sacred volume, but hesitated to make inquiry. Sometime he would voluntarily tell her, perhaps.

"Do you pray, Mr. Sourdough?" she suddenly asked.

"Silently, yes, child. Prayer is hope. Life is built upon hope. All of us often think a prayer, if we do not utter it. I pray God to help me keep and protect you, dear child."

He spoke so earnestly that she was almost moved to tears. She took his hand and thanked him fervently, saying:

"And my good Mr. Sourdough shall ever be remembered in my prayers."

Hitherto she had not asked God's blessing upon the old man, but prayed for her mother and a safe journey in this strange land.

Again he went on deck and looked through the glasses. Returning, he requested her to sing "The Long, Long Trail." She plaintively sang it. He, at her bidding, gave accompaniment on his guitar, playing softly.

"And now good-night, dear child," he said, in broken voice, as he hung the instrument in its accustomed place and vanished into the engine-room and closed the door.

She sat in deep meditation for a time and then went on deck and watched the changing, panoramic river scene. The solitude of the evening overwhelmed her. For the first time she experienced a sense of homesickness. She was far, far away. Had she been prudent in changing her plans? Nothing was going to happen, but, if something did happen, how helpless she should be! She was out of reach—hundreds of miles out of reach. What a long trip

to Dawson! The sight of people would be welcome. She had not seen half a dozen human beings since she left Whitehorse. The Yukon Territory was melancholy. Surely Alaska could not be so quiet and unpeopled! She longed for her mother. What a comfort it would be to pour out her heart to her tonight!

She turned to view the slowly descending sun. It cheered her and changed her mood. Soon the golden orb would dip under the horizon and twilight come briefly. The scene was enchanting. She brought her camera for a picture of the receding channel. The sun's rays were reflected upon it and mirrored the trees on the hillsides. She made a long exposure of the lense. The production must preserve this scene forever.

Looking farther up the river, she discerned the speck anew. It was moving. She took the camera inside and brought forth the glasses to see more clearly. Yes, it was the little craft, but in motion now, a mile, at least, away. What a relief, this evidence of life! She watched it intently. Its speed, evidently, was far short of that of the Lyle Blake. She was proud of this staunch and pretty boat named for her. But why not slacken up a bit and wait and make the acquaintance of the fellow-traveler? Doubtless it was bound for Dawson, also.

Her Mr. Sourdough had enjoined upon her a long sleep and said good-night, but she felt that he should know that the craft was again in sight. She opened the door and told him. He beckoned her to the wheel, that he might go and see.

"A fishing boat, probably," he said, upon returning. "Thank you, child, for telling me. But you are keeping late hours. Tomorrow is your day. Good-night."

She delayed only for a few notes in her diary and to say her prayer. She was conscious as she lay awake that the motor was humming louder than usual and the boat attaining extraordinary speed. The old man was anxious to reach Dawson, she reasoned. Where would they put her trunk? Why, under the table, of course. That was the very place. It would fit there and be out of the way. What a happy thought!

And she went to sleep.

CHAPTER XIII.

INTO THE ARCTIC AND BEYOND

EAGLE, where you enter "under the eagle's wings" and may here "forget there are crowns and kings, and ladies-in-waiting and such like things," if, perchance, traveling in foreign water has reminded you of their existence, slumbered soundly when the Lyle Blake, its lights out and its motor stilled, silently drifted by in the dead of night.

Only one of Eagle's eighty souls was astir. He waved a lantern, but, if intended to signal Wes Litchfiled to stop, it went unheeded.

The old man had timed his crossing the boundary line aright, at 1:00 a. m., midhour between sunset (11:30)and sunrise (2:30). His pursuer, as he feared, the craft seen below Forty Mile, had been left far behind.

For five hours, the current running strong, he had stood tense at the wheel and maintained the maximum of speed. Now he breathed easier. He had successfully run the gauntlet and was in Alaska, beyond serious danger. But he felt no pride in the achievement. It was unworthy of him. Relieved at being uncaught, the fact afforded no consolation. He had deceived the trusting girl, who must shortly know. How could he rationally explain his failure to stop at Dawson and retain her confidence? He dreaded telling her. She had given him the only happiness he had known since he was young. It would kill him to lose her.

Hitherto intensely practical and philosophical, he realized that he was transformed. She had transformed him. Never again could he endure a lonely

lot. He had missed the sweetness of life. Sentiment of his youth returned. Why had he blotted himself out in this wilderness? Things that once interested him could interest him no more. Hardships and sacrifices to which he had been indifferent would henceforth be unbearable. He yearned for love, and fain would recall his wasted years. A presentiment told him his days were numbered, and he was reaching the end of the trail.

"God help me! God help me!" Deeply contrite, thus he prayed at the wheel, penitently and humbly.

Meaning to be candid and honest with the child, he had betrayed her confidence. He grieved over his predicament and was thoroughly ashamed.

After passing Eagle, he started the motor, but, feeling secure, stopped it in an hour and relied upon the current,

His reflections were interrupted by a knock on the door and the girl calling to him.

"Heigh, ho! Mr. Sourdough, do you see that marvelous rocky hill?"

Preoccupied, hands to the wheel and eyes glued to the channel, he had been oblivious to the surroundings. She broke the spell and he saw.

"Calico Bluff, child," he answered.

He guided the boat to the opposite shore to permit her to inspect nature's wonder at leisure, and opened the door and greeted her.

She was enraptured by the spectacle.

The variegated bluff, or cliff, rising precipitately from the water, its colors heightened by the morning sun, stood out strangely fascinating and beautiful. Instantly she ran for her camera and took a picture. She stood spell-bound and could hardly credit her vision. Never had she seen anything comparable to

this Calico Bluff. It was incomprehensible, and she gazed fixedly lest it vanish like a dream.

"And you, thoughtless Mr. Sourdough, would have let me miss it," she said, chidingly, without turning around.

Watching her intently and giving no attention to the rocky formation, he made no answer.

"It is worth coming miles to see," she exclaimed. "Why does the world not know of it?" She tripped about and viewed it from all angles.

Lost in wonderment, she was unmindful of the old man until, turning, she stood before him. His appearance was haggard and shocking.

In a twinkling she forgot Calico Bluff and was filled with solicitude for him.

"My Mr. Sourdough is ill. He shall lie down at once while I get him some coffee."

"No, no, child; I am all right," he objected, but his pale, drawn features belied his words.

She led him indoors and, upon her insistence, he reclined on the seat extending the side of the cabin and she placed a pillow under his head.

He began to speak, but she silenced him. "You must not talk or move until you have had your breakfast," she said, and he was obedient.

Within a few moments the coffee was boiling. She cut thin slices of bread and toasted them crisply. As she thus busied herself he reached a robe and drew it over his face to hide his sobbing. He had momentarily given way and was completely undone.

Presently he became quiet and seemed at rest.

Then suddenly he arose and, forcing a smile, declared he was himself again and took his place at the table. He relished the toast and coffee, but would partake of nothing more.

She ate with a healthy appetite, refraining from

conversation because he was plainly fatigued and bearing up with difficulty. As she finished, she remarked casually and characteristically:

"Today's chef, who is nurse, doctor and pilot as well, begs leave to inform the master—her Mr. Sourdough—that the water supply aboard is low and would be pleased to be advised where she may replenish the same."

"I know, child. The day's run will bring us to Circle. There we shall tarry and take on water."

"Circle!"

Unacquainted with the general geography of the river, she knew that this post marked their approach to the Arctic line. It's name attested the fact.

He made no response to her exclamation.

"And Dawson—where is Dawson?" she excitedly inquired.

"Dawson is behind us, child. We passed it the night before last."

"Oh, Mr. Sourdough!"

"You were asleep, child."

"But my trunk! Why did you not call me?"

"It is secure, child, and will be forwarded to you."

"Oh, Mr. Sourdough!"

She burst into tears.

"Forgive me, child," he pleaded.

She shielded her face with her arms and bravely endeavored to control her feelings.

He spoke soothingly, but inaudably, and patted her shoulder to comfort her. She drew away.

"Oh, Mr. Sourdough!"

She left the table and sat in the corner, her back toward him. He had deceived her cruelly. How could he do so! His mumbling pleas were unheard. She could not forgive him. He had shattered her faith.

Yet she did not fear him. Her feeling was tempered with compassion. Vainly trying to divine his motive, she pitied him. Charity said that he was ill and irresponsible. Her tender heart would not brook condemnation of the poor old man.

Conscious that he was beside her, she turned and looked up at him. He was a picture of abject woe. Misery personified was stamped upon him. His suffering was intense. He stood dumb, but his look was eloquent of appeal.

Again there came the tug at her heart-strings which she felt that night at the Whitehorse Rapids when their journey began.

He tried to speak, but could not. She continued to look up at him, inquiringly, reproachfully, sorrowfully, pityingly.

Taking her hand, he dropped to his knees. She knelt at his side. They prayed in silence.

Rising, his voice came back, and he said with emotion, "Child! Child! Believe me when I say once more 'I have much to tell and you shall know it all' and that you are still 'as safe as in God's own hands.' "

"I do," fervently she said, without a smile.

Something told her that soon she would know and understand.

The chapter of their travels to date, unexplained, was temporarily closed by mutual assent. She had missed Dawson and Eagle and abandoned Fort Egbert and only by chance of early awakening seen Calico Bluff, which charmed her beyond expression and now called her for a final view.

He said they would go forward by day only for the remainder of the trip and stop at will. Now in Alaskan water they would proceed leisurely, and he

assured her she should not be permitted to overlook anything.

She had her longest lesson at the wheel. The channel was smooth and, mainly, the boat went with the current, averaging fifteen miles an hour. He, resting in the cabin, occasionally came to see that she was steering a straight course.

Her duty interested her and diverted her thoughts, but she was sad and perplexed.

He missed her smile and cheery chatter. When he complimented her skill as pilot she thanked him, but did not say Mr. Sourdough. He liked the sobriquet. She had always used it in an endearing tone. He reasoned he had forfeited the right to be so addressed and accepted it as a just penalty.

Alone, he took her unmailed letters from his pocket and was overcome with shame. They were tell-tale evidence of his perfidy. When she had asked him whether he mailed them, he had said he never forgot. He had not forgotten, but deliberately withheld them. Added to his deception was this equivalent of an outright lie. And what did it accomplish? The loss of his respect and sore anxiety, no doubt, on the part of loved ones waiting to hear from her. No wonder the letters burned in his pocket. He resolved to mail them at Circle. True, they might not go out for days. From Tanana they would be dispatched more quickly via Nenana. But he could not guiltily hold them longer. They bore Canadian stamps. The bulkiest was to her mother. As he looked at it, his shame increased. He conjectured its contents. Perhaps the girl had mentioned him. He covered the Canadian stamps with American ones, and restored the parcel to his pocket. Then he tried to sleep, but lay staring wide-awake.

The day's trip of 170 miles, starting 20 miles be-

low Eagle, was devoid of incident or thrills. It was uninterrupted by luncheon when he relieved her. The river continued lifeless, save for natives here and there, one of them a squaw with a baby, fishing from canoes near the shore. A cabin, or cache, or woodpile at intervals broke the monotony of the landscape.

Four hours in the forenoon and four in the afternoon constituted the girl's two shifts as pilot. She was unwearied, but he forbade further service and asked her not to prepare dinner for him. His appetite was gone. Before she partook of her simple repast she prepared a sandwich for him and he thanked her.

Throughout the day their attitude toward one another was of gentle constraint. They exchanged little conversation. She solicitously enjoined him to rest and he repeatedly expressed concern lest she overtax herself at the wheel. Otherwise they were silent.

Upon starting he had told her that, under favorable conditions, they should be at Circle not later than ten o'clock. As the hour approached, she frequently consulted her watch. To be so near the top of the world would be a rare experience, and she was excited in anticipation. Would the temperature be chill? On the river the weather had uniformly been pleasant, with warm breezes, and she was comfortable every minute. Now what was in store?

She went to the old man for information, asking whether she should wear a heavy coat when they landed. He smiled and, calling her child, answered that more likely she would want to flee back to the boat for shelter from the heat and mosquitos. Often the thermometer registered 90° to 100° in this region, even within the Arctic Circle, which was but a short distance beyond. She was amazed and could hardly

believe it. Quickly the truth of his statements was demonstrated.

Circle, if not actually sweltering, was uncomfortably warm this late July evening. The community of one-story log houses lined along the bank of the river seemed deserted. Its few male inhabitants, largely, were out in the hills seeking gold or building roads and trails, or down the river fishing, and its female population could be counted on one's fingers.

He ran the Lyle Blake to land, jumped out and made it fast, and assisted the girl to alight.

The long day was not at an end and the sun shone brightly in the West. Happily there was a breeze and a mosquito pest was not at once encountered.

"Hello, Wes! I'd like to look you over," said a lanky individual, approaching.

The old man recognized him and greeted him cordially.

"Certainly," he rejoined. "Go right aboard and make yourself at home. I'll be with you."

He suggested to the girl that she walk about and see the stores while he attended to some business, assuring her that she would find Circle a friendly place. There was no haste, as they would remain until morning, and he would join her within an hour. She was pleased to be on land and especially craved and promptly embraced the opportunity to do a bit of shopping. The store immediately at hand, she discovered, carried in stock almost everything of conceivable need and at prices remarkably reasonable for the Northland.

Aboard the boat, Litchfield fraternized with his caller who, puzzled, remarked, dryly:

"You seem to pass inspection."

"As clean as a hound's hind tooth," said the old man.

The inspector exhibited no badge and asked no questions. His status was understood. Litchfield volunteered the information that his companion was a young teacher bound for the interior and he was taking her to Tanana. How far beyond, he did not add.

The girl and the old man met at the door of the supply house a little later. She was carrying a bundle. He took it and she went out, while he laid in supplies. First, he deposited the withheld letters in the mail box in the corner, although he had rightly advised her that the quickest dispatch of mail would be from Fairbanks or Nenana. He bought freely of canned goods and other necessities, making two trips with boxes and baskets of provisions to the boat, and procured fresh water in quantity to last for four days.

He was puffing and almost exhausted when the girl joined him at the landing where he sat waiting her. She now knew Circle by heart. Gnats and mosquitos had begun to annoy her. Therefore, she was ready for the comforts of their cozy river home, and told him so. Twilight had slowly come. There was no night.

Entering the cabin, he seated himself, and his wistful, expectant manner, without words, invited the nightly reading. For once she was forgetful and about to omit it. She took the Book and at random read the story of the Good Samaritan.

"Thank you, child, and good-night," he said, and she, with a faint smile, said, "Good-night, Mr. Sourdough," as he retired to the engine-room.

She slept until late in the morning. Then a knock

at his door brought no answer. He was up and out long before. She hurried breakfast.

He came with fresh-laid eggs, home-grown lettuce and a half-dozen grapefruit, which delighted her. He boasted proudly that the best lettuce obtainable anywhere was produced in the far North. Native celery was equally choice. He regretted she could not see the pretty gardens, but others would be shown her on the way. She amused him by asking, seriously, whether grapefruit grew abundantly up here. No; it was an alien product, shipped from California, he explained, and surprised her by saying that grapefruit was often served at road-houses on lonely trails. Hardships of life in the wilds were usually much overdrawn and exaggerated, he admitted.

Her experience was limited and only begun, she observed, but she could testify that this breakfast was quite up to date and left nothing to be desired.

It put them in better spirits. Her attitude was still somewhat constrained; his penitent and appealing. He was less care-worn and haggard, but aged and unlike the buoyant man she met at Whitehorse. His benign expression was affected by worry and remorse.

The run from Circle to Ft. Yukon, eighty-five miles, was made leisurely, with an hour's stop at noon. The channel was broader and natives were oftener in evidence. He was pilot. She employed the time sewing and mending, making notes in her diary and continuing a long letter to her mother. In writing home she purposely avoided mentioning anything that would give alarm. She was sure that all would be well long before the letter was received. When she would recover her trunk, she did not know. It contained clothing and books and many things she could not do without at Fairbanks. It

would be embarrassing to be restricted to the two outfits contained in her suit-case and her hiking costume. The thought of drawing upon her modest savings to replenish her wardrobe disturbed her. But she was practical-minded and wisely argued that she should make the best of the vexatious situation as it developed. There was nothing else to do.

She was eager to see Ft. Yukon and experience a sojourn in the Arctic Circle. In school she had studied about the frigid zone and ever since been inclined to shiver when it came to mind. She had supposed only Eskimos lived in the Arctics and Winter prevailed all the year around. But it was so different. People back in her home State might think she was romancing when she told them how hot it became up here and how lettuce and celery and vegetables generally were grown successfully. How little the outside world knew of this wonderland! How little most Alaskans knew of their own country! She recalled that the Governor had emphasized these facts and deplored the untruths implanted in the popular mind.

It was evening, six o'clock, but broad daylight, when the old trading post, Ft. Yukon, came into view, strung out on the north bank of the river. It was larger than Circle. Native life predominated. It was the most populous community they had reached. An Indian mission church occupied a conspicuous place in the foreground. The most imposing structure, built of logs, was the mission hospital, the old man told her, as she stood at the wheel with him approaching the landing. She vizualized the town wholly from the boat and felt that she would find it most interesting. He had been there often and explained its make-up to her.

A crowd of curious natives—men, women and

children—watched them as they landed, and responded silently to her nods. Picturesque, unkempt tots appeared timid and clung to their mothers. A white nurse spoke pleasantly and evinced a desire to become acquainted with the girl, who promptly introduced herself and walked away with her. Litchfield had said he would be busy for a time. She accompanied the nurse to the hospital and was shown through the well-kept institution. They went to the church and talked with the Indian rector and looked at the grave of Archdeacon Stuck, who achieved fame by climbing Mt. M'Kinley. Then they walked the length of the village street and peeped into the doors of huts and took snap-shots. The nurse knew the natives and called them by name.

It was all wonderful to the girl, and she was glad, after all, she had come down the river by gas boat. She would never forget Ft. Yukon, nor the mosquitos which proved an unendurable pest late in the evening. Her new-made friend, the nurse, invited her to pass the night at the hospital, but she thought it better to sleep on the boat in order to be prepared for an early morning start. The old man, immune to the pest, was sitting on deck waiting for her. He had purchased additional supplies and invested in a fur cap and purse for her. She was touched by these gifts and, in voicing her appreciation, she again called him "dear Mr. Sourdough."

An exceptionally favorable current carried them on swiftly the next day and the Lyle Blake behaved its very best. He kept the wheel. Beaver, a fur-trading post and gateway to the Chandalar, where sturdy miners, battling for years against hard odds, were beginning to realize the golden fruits of their toil, was passed without stopping. He was familiar with the country and told her of it. Transportation charges

by river and trail were all but prohibitive because of distances and difficulties encountered. Wood delivered at the mines above the timber line in the Chandalar cost $70 per cord and other necessities entailed a proportionate outlay. But the pioneer spirit was adamant and indomitable. Only by the building of roads, he said, could the mineral wealth and other resources of the Territory be made available. Circle by water was about 750 miles from Fairbanks, the northern terminus of the government railroad, but by highway or trail between the two points—an extension of the Valdez-Fairbanks highway already built from the coast—the distance would be reduced about two-thirds and could easily be covered in two days.

He gave her much information at their noon-day meal. It interested her to learn that she was really not far from Fairbanks by direct line and was journeying in a circuitous, round-about way. She regretted there was not a map at hand to study closely. He promised to find one at Tanana, if he could. A chart of the lower river hung in the engine-room.

The buildings of the abandoned military post, Ft. Hamlin, held her attention in passing, and he offered to stop, but she elected to proceed on to Rampart, where they tarried for the night.

He had been at the wheel almost continuously for twelve hours, covering 243 miles from Ft. Yukon, but he disclaimed weariness and apparently had recuperated steadily. She had kept busy with her needle and pen, save at mealtime. The fast progress pleased her. Every hour, she thought, was bringing her closer to her destination, where word from home surely awaited her. She could now hardly conceal her desire to reach her journey's end.

Not until morning did they go ashore at Rampart,

where, after a brief glimpse of Rex Beach's cabin, they spent two hours visiting the agricultural experiment farm. The fields of growing grain delighted her and rested her eyes. She had not seen such acres under cultivation since she left the States. The old man disclosed remarkable knowledge of farming, acquired in his boyhood and youth. He was enthusiastic over the agricultural possibilities of Alaska. The entire Tanana Valley, he said, was fertile and productive, and in the vicinity of Fairbanks homesteaders were thriving.

Rampart was virtually deserted. Its male population was at work on the farm or digging gold in the hills. Five miles out, a former Governor of the State of Washington, now dead, had partially retrieved a fortune lost in politics and public service at the time Rex Beach was writing his book.

Walking slowly toward the boat, the old man, who had seemed more like his old self during the morning, suddenly became faint, and stopped and leaned against a building. He panted and was deathly pale. The startled girl took his arm to steady him, and led him with difficulty to a seat on a step a few feet away. She was greatly alarmed and realized that his heart was affected. He tried vainly to speak. She ran to the store, which was closed, and she called loudly to a farm-hand they had passed a few minutes before. He hurried to her assistance. They bent over the old man, who, now in complete collapse, was slipping from the step. His eyes were closed and he looked ghastly. The farm-hand, quick of action and strong of arm, lifted him and placed him on the seat, and doffed his sweater and made a pillow of it. The girl, half panic-stricken, inquired anxiously where they could get a doctor. Rampart had none. A few drugs were kept in the store, but the

storekeeper was away. The farm-hand rubbed the old man's hands to restore circulation. She brought water from the boat quickly and moistened his lips and bathed his temples. He revived and looked about vaguely, his faculties momentarily inactive. Consciousness returned, he comprehended what had happened and, sitting up, began to mumble apologies, and smiled upon the girl, sadly.

"I am so sorry, so sorry, child," he said. "Did I give you trouble? Forgive me. I am all right now."

Noticing the presence of the farm-hand, he thanked him and repeated his regret at giving trouble. He could not account for the attack. The girl, full of sympathy and tenderness, told him not to talk about it now.

In half an hour he was able, unassisted, to go to the boat. He proposed starting at once, but she would not have it so, and prevailed upon him to rest until noon. She prepared a broth for him and directed him to remain perfectly quiet. The farm-hand, who had followed them aboard, ready to be of further service, suggested a stimulant in case of a recurrence of the attack, but the old man shook his head, declaring, feebly, that his trouble was over. He was appreciative of the stranger's help, and the girl thanked him over and over again, and took his name, with a promise to drop him a line about "their patient."

Tanana was only eighty miles below. Against the old man's weak protest, the girl took command upon starting. She felt that it was imperative to reach the more settled community at the earliest possible moment. There she could obtain medicine. The post at Ft. Gibbon, of which she had heard, would have a doctor. She was courageous, but felt her utter helplessness with a sick man on the lonely river.

Cautiously she handled the wheel, keeping in the middle of the stream. The motor was not in operation. She prayed for protection and that the old man be given strength. As if in answer, he came to her side and assured her that his rest had made a new man of him. A tinge of color had come to his cheeks and he looked better. He wanted to relieve her, but she would not permit.

All afternoon she stood at her post, looking ahead and straining her eyes for a sight of Tanana.

Upon his urgent insistence, at 7 o'clock, she consented to relinquish the wheel and he guided the boat to a landing. Here they had dinner and rested for the night. The river junction was about twenty miles below, he estimated, and they could reach Tanana early in the morning.

She was fatigued from the trying ordeal of the day and slept long and peacefully.

CHAPTER XIV

"THAT LONG, LONG TRAIL WITH YOU"

SHE was first astir on the morrow, and, drawing the curtains, was astonished to see that the clock marked ten. They had contemplated an early start. Apprehensive, she listened at the door and could hear him breathing hard. Her impulse was to waken him, but she hesitated. He was not well and needed sleep. Possibly he had not rested during the night.

Going aft, she surveyed the scene. There was not a sign of life. The melancholy stillness put her in a reverie. Sitting on deck, she lived anew her fortnight's experience on the river. Yes, two full weeks and a day had elapsed since leaving Whitehorse. Her diary confirmed the time. Faithfully and in infinite detail she had chronicled the daily happenings. An unfinished letter to her mother was a comprehensive narrative in itself. Mr. Sourdough had advised her to hold her mail until they reached Nenana. What would her devoted mother think of her long silence? She resolved to finish the letter during the day and let it take its course from Tanana. It would offer proof of her fidelity to loving duty. Then she would mail another letter from Nenana. In describing her journey she wrote much of the kind old man —all about him, indeed, excepting passing Dawson and leaving her trunk behind. That was too disagreeable and would unnecessarily trouble her mother. Of course, the trunk would be recovered. She was loth to set down aught against him. Uniformly he had been fatherlike in his devotion. His assurance that she would be as safe "as in God's own hands" was constantly in her mind. Fear had

never for a moment possessed her, or distrust. Yet she was conscious of his one deception and still secretly grieved over it. The motive was incomprehensible to her. But his humiliation and distress were so deep and his penitence so sincere that she could not help pitying and forgiving him. He had fretted himself into illness, she believed, and her loyal heart forbade resentment or reproach.

To her mother she depicted him as the most kindly, sweet-tempered, lovable old man she had ever met, and said she constantly marvelled that such a character could thus develop in the wilds of a frontier land. If her father were living, she wrote, she would want him to be "just like my Mr. Sourdough." She told of his courtesy, his thoughtfulness, his gentleness, his love of music and his knowledge of the Bible, his pitiful protest when she sang "Until we meet again" at the rapids, and how "The Long, Long Trail" had soothed and comforted him. With her pen she endeavored so to picture him that her mother would know him and share her admiration. The episode of his fainting spell at Rampart was omitted. His condition was giving her keen anxiety. She was convinced he ought now to be under a doctor's care. When they reached Fairbanks she would insist upon this. An old man with a weak heart should not abide in a lonely country beyond the reach of medical aid. He had told her that the post surgeon at Ft. Gibbon was the sole doctor between Nenana and Holy Cross, and that his duties kept him at headquarters. Mr. Sourdough should see him and have his case diagnosed while they were at Tanana. Within ten days, certainly, they would reach Fairbanks. How relieved she would be! But she dreaded parting with him. Until he was entirely well she would not permit him to leave.

Her reverie was broken by a cheery "Good morning, child."

The old man stood in the doorway smiling. Behind his smile she detected unmistakable weariness. Plainly his buoyancy was forced. The brightness of his eye was gone. He was a forlorn Mr. Sourdough.

In extreme solicitude, she bade him return to his couch while she prepared breakfast, but he demurred and persisted in helping her. He ate nothing, but drank a cup of coffee. His languor continued and, in a few minutes, he rose and went unsteadily to his bed, mumbling that he was tired, but would shortly be himself. The engine-room was hot and she opened the forward door for ventilation. He thanked her in almost inaudible speech.

"Stop thinking and go to sleep," she said, and, with a wan smile, he closed his eyes.

Another day lost! Poor old man! What would the end be? She was mindful of their remoteness, and thankful that Tanana was only twenty miles farther on. In an emergency she could get there unaided, for he had taught her the handling of the boat. Responsibility rested heavily upon her, but she was unafraid.

She finished her letter and sealed and addressed it. Her mother would prize this bulky epistle coming from far-off Alaska, requiring three stamps to carry it. She would read and re-read it until she memorized every line. That was her mother's habit. Blessed mother! How she would devour this story of a strange journey in a strange land!

Glancing in at the old man, she was gratified to see that he slumbered peacefully. She tip-toed to avoid rousing him. He had said he slept with one eye open. She credited him with an open and alert ear. Often he had wakened instantly and startled

her. Now every minute of sleep would tend to restore him and, possibly, they might yet reach Tanana tonight. She hoped so, but it was all-important that he should rest. His hours at the wheel had been long and overtaxed him and aggravated his ailment, she reasoned. Yet on their stroll to the rapids a fortnight ago he was so sprightly and full of life and had mildly boasted of carrying heavy packs over the hills. His decline was inexplicable.

Recording page after page in her diary, an hour passed and still he slumbered. Again she approached and listened to his breathing. It seemed regular and normal. She was moved to touch his brow, but did not dare.

Apparently divining her presence, he slowly opened his eyes and extended his hand. She took and held it and he looked at her tenderly without a word. How aged he had become! Deep lines she had not hitherto observed stood out on his face and brow. But his pallid features were in repose. What fine features! How handsome he must have been when young! Sleepily he closed his eyes and seemed in a dream, but the pressure of his hand told her that he was awake. His lips closed in a half smile. Her heart throbbed with devout love of him. Never had she felt so closely drawn to anyone, save her mother. A profound and perfect peace had come over him.

The tick of the clock sounded louder and she could hear the chirping of a lost sparrow on the shore. Otherwise the silence was oppressively unbroken. He turned slightly and his hand relaxed and rested on the pillow. Again he slept. She thanked God for this blessing and noiselessly went outside.

Evening had come during her vigil, although the

slowly descending sun shone wondrously. The bare and uninviting landscape was illuminated by the brilliant orb and clear sky. Tranquility in the utmost reigned. She accepted this as a good omen and her spirits revived.

Standing entranced on deck, she hummed the melody he loved. Unconsciously, with music welling from her soul, the notes became higher. She stopped abruptly lest it disturb him.

"Sing on, child," came his voice from within.

"Oh, it is too bad that I woke you," she exclaimed penitently, going to him.

"Sing on, child," he repeated.

She sang on and on as she never sang before, not loudly, but clearly and plaintively, and words and tune conveyed deeper sympathy and meaning than ever before.

When, finally, she paused, he began to rise. She objected and he meekly lay down. There was a touch of color on his cheeks. He was better. She made tea and toast, of which he partook with relish. But he was feeble and she insisted, gently commanded, that he stay abed until she gave him permission to dress. He nodded obedience and went to sleep and slept soundly.

Wide-awake, absorbed in the glory of the nightless night, she lingered outside to watch the sunset and the radiant glows and hues ensuing. It was rich reward of this venturesome journey, she thought, to see this gorgeous sunset on the Yukon. It was too beautiful for description. Her pen was ready and graphic in narrating experiences and telling of people, but halt and lame in presenting such a scene. A Robert Louis Stevenson might do it fair justice, or a Sidney Lawrence inadtequately reproduce it,

but Nature was ever the master, and Art, at best, an inept pupil.

Her thoughts took flight to the mining camp at Mayo. Had Wayne Roberts a temperament to enjoy the spectacle she had witnessed? His appreciation of the beauties of Lynn Canal, she recalled, was earnest and eloquent. But was he a worshipper of the sun and moon and sky? How the mountains and sea suffered in comparison with an Alaskan sunset! All was forgotten in her enthusiasm while the spell of it endured—all else, save the young man Roberts, who figured persistently and pleasingly in her fancies. Was he thinking of her and would he keep his promise to come and see her at Fairbanks? Wondering, as the sun began to reappear, she went inside and shaded the window and retired to dream of him.

Continuous daylight in the region of the Arctics affected Lyle Blake's routine. She found it impossible to keep regular hours. When Winter came it would be equally difficult, no doubt, to adjust herself to long darkness. Think of constantly teaching by artificial light! She preferred these protracted days, with only an hour or two between sunset and sunrise. Often she had seen the twilight merge into dawn. She shuddered at the prospect of reversed conditions, with day turned into night. Sunshine was her very life. How could she endure its absence?

She was dwelling upon these things when she arose the next day and discovered that she had again overslept. It was 10:30 o'clock. Hurriedly dressing, she tapped on the engine-room door and, receiving no answer, opened it quietly. He, too, was oversleeping. How remarkable! When well he required so little sleep. This would make a new man of him and she would not disturb him for the world.

She was about to withdraw when rays of the sun penetrated the room and shone about him. Why, he was smooth-shaven and had made a careful toilet and gone to sleep. Dear old man! Always he was so neat and clean. Never had he appeared before her with soiled hands or unbrushed clothes or uncombed hair. How improved he was today—groomed to look his best and surprise her! Bless his heart! She closed the door and went outside to wait his waking. It was noon when the odor of boiling coffee told her that he was getting breakfast.

"Heigh-ho! child—how are you?"

"Shocked by your disobedience," she responded, in feigned disapproval of his leaving his bed without her permission.

She reached up and patted his cheek and embraced him in forgiveness, and told him how pleased and proud she was.

"My real Mr. Sourdough is well," she said, affectionately, "and he isn't going to worry or be ill any more."

He beamed upon her as of old and, in contentment and happiness, listened to her chatter as they ate their breakfast.

But he was weak and without animation, and not her real Mr. Sourdough in the flesh, after all. He was suppressing his lassitude and languor, she could see. Still the improvement in his condition was marked. Another day or two days of rest would restore him fully. She had thought when he first appeared that they might proceed to Tanana during the afternoon and early evening, but now she detected that he was unequal to the least exertion. Therefore, they must tarry and he rest and recuperate. The cozy craft would become the Lyle Blake Sanitarium for the time being and she would pre-

side over and direct it as manager, physician and nurse. He, acquiescent, assented to the wise plan and became her placid ward and willing patient. The provisions aboard were ample for their simple needs, but the supply of fresh water must be cautiously conserved to last through the week. Her managerial talent and resourcefulness developed daily and proved quite as dependable as his.

Thus one, two, three, four days passed, with nothing to mar the peace and tranquility, and she found reassurance in his slow, but steady recupation. She sang when he was wakeful and read stories in the old magazines and chapters from the Bible. Sometimes he would fall asleep as she read and later offer contrite and humble apology therefor.

The fifth day of their tarrying opened auspiciously. He had left his bed the evening before and appeared at breakfast looking better and stronger than at any time since his collapse at Rampart. He said they would start on during the afternoon. The engine would first be overhauled. She was delighted, but enjoined him not to be in a hurry and "over do" himself.

"Bear in mind, please, Mr. Sourdough," she said in a tone of authority, "that the head of this sanitarium reserves the right to control your conduct until it pronounces you cured and grants you a full discharge."

"I am just plain Mr. Lazybody," he answered, omitting to call her "child," out of respect to her assumed station. "You have been most considerate and kind, and I beg leave to assure you that in my convalescence any rules you may choose to impose will not be transgressed, but be observed and obeyed to the letter. I've found the discipline of your institution physically helpful and upbuilding. Indeed,

Madam"—bowing to her—"I make no secret of the fact that my will power is strained to the limit this very minute in even suggesting an initial step toward relinquishing my role of patient. I should be less than human, if I were not tempted to prolong my indisposition and be the further recipient of your gentle ministration and watchful care."

"There, there—did I not warn you not to 'overdo'?" she admonished, much amused by his speech and manner. "You hazard a relapse and break the rules with your grandiloquence," she laughingly added.

The range of his vocabulary in his formal little speech, the only one of the kind he ever made to her, interested her and she charged her memory with it and in due time jotted it down in her diary.

But she liked his natural bent the more and made this fact known by resuming her natural attitude toward him, impressing upon him that he should not treat his illness lightly, and "be very, very careful."

Thereupon his unaffected demeanor at once returned. Soberly, again calling her "child," he expressed in intense, earnest, simple terms his heartfelt gratitude for her kindness and goodness to him. He deplored the delay and his helplessness when she, "dear child," had given him such happiness in journeying with him. Never before had he been ill, and he was sure this breakdown indicated no serious or permanent trouble. He could not account for it. He said again and again that he thanked Providence that she was with him in this trial. Her presence had saved him and this journey would ever be the sweetest memory of his life.

As she looked into his honest eyes she was moved by emotion and could hardly speak. She took his hand and begged him to believe that she found joy

in trying to be of help and said she thanked her God for the privilege.

"I have prayed that you be made well," she added, with deep feeling, "and, near or far, shall continue to pray for you when this journey is ended. You are my good Mr. Sourdough and I shall never forget you."

The thought conveyed that they would part distressed him and he was once more the pathetic, tragic figure that appealed to her that fateful evening at the rapids when their journey began.

"Child—dear child," was all that he could say.

Realizing his acute mental suffering, and fearing another collapse, she impulsively promised she would not leave him.

"Never, never, child?" he pleaded.

In pity she nodded assent. He accepted the promise literally, his countenance brightened and it was evident that her words had relieved him of a great burden. But he was wrought up and his speech was thick as, vainly, he tried to say something to her. He stammered and she could not understand, other than his constant reiteration of "child, child." Words were on his tongue which he could not utter.

"Not now, not now—do not try to talk now," she urged, solicitously, and she soothed and quieted him with that one infallible remedy for his racked and weary soul—the singing of the old song.

Soon he was calm and composed and, a little later, proposed to fix the engine and make ready to go, but she said no, and, obediently, he went to his couch. She felt that the effects of the trying scene must first wear off and he, seemingly, sensed the need thereof.

Bravely she whiled away the afternoon, finding solace in her pen when not busy keeping their water home in perfect order. She had adorned it with cut-

out pictures and improvised hangings and draperies. He was orderly by nature, but she had taught him greater orderliness. Everything was in its proper place and the spic-and-span craft, which had excited her admiration and enthusiasm when the old man so gallantly escorted her aboard, days ago, at her deft hands had become a veritable thing of beauty. The feminine touch was in evidence in every nook and corner. If she could only be as cozily domiciled in one of those little log bungalows at Fairbanks of which he had told her! She was a home-maker. Why did people want big houses with space going to waste? A cottage was more livable. She abhorred city apartments, which lacked domestic atmosphere and were conducted so scientifically and systematically. Living in a machine-like way and by formula would be unbearable to her. It was not living, at all. The Twentieth Century world was going too fast and the home disappearing. She could be supremely happy in a shack away off here in Alaska, if only her dear mother were with her. Yes, and the dear old man, and—well, she could not eliminate Wayne Roberts from her thinking. How ridiculous! Girl-like, she tried to convince herself that he was not giving her a thought and never really meant to come to Fairbanks to see her.

Five o'clock! In Indiana it was nine. Her mother was probably writing to her, or reading the Bible, or saying her prayer. Or she might be at a movie show. She liked the pictures, and it was such relaxation and she did not have to think. Precious little mother! It was right for her to find diversion as best she could. Her life had been so full of worries, yet she was so cheerful and so young. What a reader of stories and what a fine letter writer! Always she wrote with such intimate, fascinating detail and told

just what one wished most to know. She, Lyle, did not dare hope to become so accomplished, but was ambitiously emulative.

Thinking fondly of her mother, she became despondent and gloomy, and was giving vent to apprehension, keenly anxious about Mr. Sourdough, and looking into the future darkly, when the stillness was broken by the sound of a motor boat.

She went on deck, where the old man, his ear instantly receptive, at once joined her. They watched the craft as it came swiftly up stream, directing its course toward their snug harbor, whose serenity hitherto had been undisturbed. Only two canoes, with Indian fishermen, had passed, and they hugged the opposite shore.

Mr. Sourdough plainly did not welcome the newcomer. He frowned and was silent.

It was an ugly, unpainted boat, and in every aspect showed hard usage and disregard of appearance. Its motor whirred noisily, as, with a shrill, discordant whistle, it chugged toward the bank and alongside the prepossessing Lyle Blake.

"Uninvited and without as much as by your leave," remarked the girl. He made no answer, but looked displeased. She resented its bold approach, but her resentment vanished, a moment later, when a little bronzed mortal, master and pilot, emerged from the wheel-house and gave the old man a queer, but hearty greeting.

"Hello, Ves," he called. "Glad find you, yes. You get 'im, yes. Sure! Not los', no. Late, yes. But nev' disappoint, no. Ver' slow, yes. Got 'im jus' same, yes. You bet, yes."

Seeing the girl, he touched his cap and bowed and scraped stiffly in confusion.

"How are you?" Litchfield responded, somewhat

coldly, and, turning to the girl, he said, by way of introduction:

"Taki—Takihusha—is an old friend and," with an attempted smile, "he is an Alaska Sourdough, if he doesn't look or act it."

She nodded to the little man, who was bobbing about like an automaton, and offered him her hand, but he was too embarrassed to see it and suddenly too tongue-tied for further words.

Typically Japanese, he was of uncertain, indeterminate age—fifty, sixty or seventy—with a dark brown skin, black eyes, a continuous grin, exposing stained, protruding teeth, and the funniest jack-in-the-box mannerisms she ever saw.

Litchfield was uncordial and ill at ease, but Taki, she saw, was too abashed to notice it.

Her intuition told her that her presence was embarrassing to both and she left them quickly.

As she prepared dinner she overheard part of their conversation. Taki had recovered his speech and was continually saying, "You get 'im, yes," and the old man, in calm undertone, explaining, "No, no, Taki, it couldn't be done." She jostled the dishes to escape eavesdropping. Their voices betrayed no anger, but Taki's was very insistent. Something was wrong and it troubled her. Mr. Sourdough was in no condition to be annoyed, and she was annoyed for him. The little man's "You get 'im, yes," repeated over and over, ceased to amuse her and became tiresome and affected her nerves. What was it all about and why had he come? Her anxiety grew as the subdued conversation was prolonged.

Finally, dinner waiting, she went to the door and asked if it should be served.

"I am ready, child," he said, "and Taki, too, I am sure."

But Taki snatched a hurried minute more to board his own boat to look in the mirror and slick his hair and primp a bit.

When he reappeared and they were seated, her Mr. Sourdough's constraint was gone and she was pleased to find him his courteous, kindly self, although he was tired and talked and ate little. Taki gradually conquered his timidity, but was also untalkative. He scrutinized everything in the cabin with his keen searching eyes and, when they rose, he glanced furtively into the engine-room. Sensing the meaning of all this, the old man made excuse to examine the engine, in order to convince Taki that nothing was concealed or to be overlooked, and he, apparently, was satisfied.

Thereupon Litchfield proposed that they go to the other boat and said to the girl that he would not be gone long. Again he was distraught, and this roused in her a hostile feeling toward the visitor for intruding himself at this priceless time of convalescence. Except for his coming, they might be on their way. It was only eight o'clock and the sun still three hours high. The sound of the motor boat had interrupted her depression of two hours ago, but not dispelled it, and now it overwhelmed her. This daylight night was the darkest she had experienced on the Yukon.

"Please, Mr. Sourdough, do not tarry," she had urged in pleading, quivering voice as he started, and he, abstractedly, promised, and asked her not to worry.

Preoccupied as he was, the affectionate term of "child" was unspoken, and this hurt her. She wanted to cry and could not. Her Bible was at hand and she picked it up, but was in a daze and unable to concentrate upon the holy words. Outside she found

the atmosphere forbidding. The sun blinded her and obscured its reflections. Nothing really had happened to frighten her, but she was miserable and wretched. She walked about, in and out of the cabin, and once started to go ashore and hesitated and sat on deck. Summoning her reserve strength, she succeeded in centering her thoughts upon her devoted mother and the blissful times they had together in her school days and early girlhood. She began to doze and shortly slept. Half reclining in a corner of the deck, she had doffed her sweater and made a pillow of it.

Twilight was almost gone when he came from the ugly craft adjacent and discovered her there.

"Dear, tired child," he murmured, bending over her. "Did she think I had deserted her?"

He spoke in low tone, intending not to awaken her, but she moved and opened her eyes and looked up at him wonderingly. She had been dreaming and her faculties for an instant were inactive. Sleepily she stood and then gave a glad cry.

"Oh, Mr. Sourdough, is it really you? I thought you had left me and gone far away with Taki and would never come back."

"Leave you, dear child! Never! You are all I have and all of life to me."

"How happy I am—oh, so happy—that it was just a bad dream! And you are not in trouble?"

"No, child, none whatever. How could I be in your dear keeping and under your watchful care?"

"And of the good God above."

"Who watches over all His children and slumbers not nor sleeps," said the old man, reverently and tenderly.

It was near midnight when they went inside and she lighted a lamp—the first occasion for it—and

read a Psalm to him. He sat drooping, listening intently, and, at the conclusion, began to say something, and halted. She dismissed him gently, telling him he must have rest and sleep, and he bade her "good-night, child," and retired to his couch, completely undone by the happenings of the day.

Takahusha was a trader on the Koyukuk and the old man had purchased for him the cases of liquor which he had thrown overboard after leaving Whitehorse. He had used money advanced by the trader to buy it and could not immediately repay it. Of the little man he had no fear, and the transaction would, of course, be adjusted fairly in due course; but the Japanese had been suspicious and obdurate and importunate and slow to understand. An almost interminable discussion had brought them to agreement by the terms of which Litchfield signed a paper giving a lien on the Lyle Blake. Taki did not drive a hard settlement, but was shrewd and calculating and bent upon certain reimbursement. He was not by occupation a bootlegger, but dealt in whisky, when obtainable, as an incident of his business, which covered a radius of a hundred miles from his trading post. Trappers and miners depended upon him to supply their wants, and he could bargain more profitably for pelts and nuggets with standard brands of liquor than with money. He refused to handle hootch or moonshine, but the sale of a product bearing the Canadian government stamp, in his appraisement and philosophy, was entirely lawful. Therefore, he kept it in stock and paid generous premium for it. Litchfield having served him capably in the past, he relied upon him solely at the close of this navigation season and had come in quest of him. Naturally the discovery that he brought none of the prized cargo puzzled and irritated him, and ex-

planations did not explain. But once a settlement was effected he became perfectly reconciled and cemented their old-time friendship with a hearty hand-shake.

Ill and sensitive, the old man's chief concern was for the girl. His boat was his best beloved belonging since she had chistened it, and he was pledged to keep it ever clean. The prospect, however remote, of its now passing into other hands harrowed him unspeakably. He had cautioned Takihusha not to speak of the transaction in her presence, or mention the destroyed contraband. The little man, he knew, was discreet and could be trusted. His awe of the girl would put a padlock upon his tongue. The old man himself intended to tell her and hungered for the opportunity. All the way down the river, time after time, he had been on the point of disclosing his transgressions, hiding nothing. Tonight he sought again to speak and could not. Peace of mind was impossible until he told her and deserved the confidence she gave him.

Unstrung by the severe strain of the day, she, too, was wakeful and her sleep broken and unrefreshing. Much of the time she was conscious of his restlessness and pitied him deeply. She did not oversleep, but was up and about early, thankful that the bad night was ended. Solicitously she listened at his door. It was strangely quiet within. Could he have risen? No, if he were not there, the door would be ajar. She marvelled at the stillness. Going on deck, she detected a sign of life. Aboard the ugly craft alongside Taki was getting breakfast. An odor of frying ham or bacon attested the fact. No doubt he was a good cook. The average of his race, she knew, was gifted in that respect. She was curious as to the contents of his larder and thought she and Mr. Sour-

dough would enjoy dining with him. But she preferred that he depart. He had brought unhappiness. She disliked the boldness of his coming into the snug harbor and his snooping scrutiny of their cozy home. The memory thereof was fresh and repellent. She half wished that he had had a bad night. Perhaps after breakfast she might think better of it, but just now she had misgivings whether she could ever tolerate oriental ways. Why had he intruded himself, anyway?

Glancing at the ugly craft, she saw him grinning and bowing and scraping in the friendliest sort of way. He had come out while she was absorbed in harsh thoughts of him. She gave him a cheery "good morning, Mr. Taki," and bestowed upon him a fetching smile. Thereupon he grinned and bowed and scraped all the more animatedly and, womanlike, she changed her mind and decided that, after all, he might be likeable, or, at least tolerable. She enjoyed his funny chatter, but, as on first sight, her presence rendered him speechless.

Re-entering the cabin, she again listened and, hearing no sound, opened the old man's door anxiously. He seemed lifeless. She touched his brow and it was cold. But he was breathing. Alarmed, in a panic, she ran out and called loudly:

"Come, Mr. Taki—come—come! Mr. Litchfield is dying!"

In a twinkling the agile little man was at the old man's bedside, rubbing his hands and forehead and shifting him to his right side. Then he ran out and back, bringing a bottle of camphor, which he applied to the nostrils. He motioned to her to hold it there and he deftly made a bandage and soaked it in water and placed it over the eyes. This treatment brought speedy results. The old man stirred and

lifted his arm and began to revive. He moaned and mumbled.

"He soon better, yes," said Taki. "Not paralyze, no. Heart weak, yes. Maybe faint in sleep, yes."

Slowly his circulation improved and his respiration became regular and he recognized them. The attack was similar to that at Rampart, but doubly severe.

Taki, unremitting in his attention, made known to the girl in odd speech that immediate danger was past, but that "he mus' res' days and days yet, yes."

When summoned, the little man was about to go, and, five minutes later, would have called good-bye and been off. His business settled, there was nothing to detain him. Perhaps he realized that he was unwelcome. Now service to the old man and the girl became his one object and most willingly and faithfully did he perform his self-imposed duties.

Unobtrusively he took command as manager, doctor, nurse and chef and was adept in each capacity. Experience in the wilds, out of the reach of help, had taught him what to do. On that ugly craft of his, which whistled so discordantly and chugged so loudly as it came alongside so boldly, he carried everything conceivable that might be needed, including a medicine kit and plenty of bottled water. It was his oriental habit, nurtured and cultivated by necessity. His constancy and devotion never faltered.

Only a while ago she was asking, why had he come? God forgive her! The little man was heaven-sent, she now believed, and her penitent heart beat warmly in gratitude for his coming.

The old man remained conscious and his mind clear, but he was helpless. Spirits of nitre held his fever in check. He articulated with difficulty. When

he tried to speak, the girl, who sat at his bedside and held his hand, would quiet him. He talked incoherently in his sleep and when awake fretted if she left the room. But he improved daily and at the end of the week wanted to start on, although still incapacitated. Taki favored this, but regretted he could not go to Fairbanks and invited them to come home with him for a few days. The old man approved the idea, and she, ignorant of distances and local geography, and seeing no alternative, readily assented. Her school would not open for two weeks.

Tanana was nearly thirty miles distant, but a swift current expedited the trip, which began at dawn and was covered by noon. Taki led the way with his own boat and she guided the Lyle Blake closely in wake. Landing on the left bank below the town, he quickly launched a row boat with which he was equipped and took her across the river to attend to her mail and make some small purchases while he replenished oil and gas. Tanana was deserted, its inhabitants out hunting or mining, with no vessels in port. She did not meet half a dozen souls and dismissed the idea of consulting the post surgeon because of her complete faith in Taki. In depositing the long letter to her mother she saw some picture postcards and bought one and sent a line thereon to the Governor's daughter. Civilization, even in repose, cheered her, and the silent barracks looked attractive. She entertained blissful, but mistaken, thoughts that Fairbanks was near at hand, that Mr. Sourdough was surely getting well and that their journey—so wonderful, after all—would soon be happily rounded out into a bright and abiding mem-

ory. Sometime she would re-visit Tanana and stay longer. Now she was in a hurry.

Within an hour they were on their way, going farther down the Yukon and thence into and up the Koyukuk. The kindly Taki had connected the pretty boat with his ugly craft and was at the helm. Thus spared from the wheel, she read to the old man and resumed her role of nurse and chef.

CHAPTER XV.

AT THE WATER TRAIL'S END

LYLE BLAKE'S disposition was too cheerful and her soul too attuned to the great outdoors and the wonders of nature to permit occasional depression to mar her pleasure in the strange journey. She cultivated joyful moods, put aside misgivings and dismissed her doubts and fears. Her mother had instilled in her an abiding faith in God. She prayed from her heart, believingly, and was sustained by the simple philosophy of "all is well." The twenty-third Psalm, "The Lord is my shepherd," was constantly in her mind and comforted her. Providence was directing and guiding her.

She was thankful that she had been brought into the lonely old man's life and felt that there was a purpose in it all. Her affection for him had grown, accentuated by his illness, and she was too loyal to harbor any distrust. She still had twinges of worry over his unaccountable action in slipping through Dawson and leaving her trunk behind, but her kindly spirit was forgiving and she did not dwell upon or brood over the incident.

Not once did she regret accompanying him from Whitehorse. It had given her an experience of a life-time. How fortunate she did come! What if he had fallen ill alone on the river?

Happily for her peace of mind, she did not realize that she was now too far from Fairbanks to report for duty when the schools opened. Ethically she was in honor-bound to be there on the date fixed. An obligation was to her sacred and she had never broken one. But she did not know and would be

powerless did she know. Untoward circumstances, not wilfully contrived, but already beyond control, had rendered fulfillment impossible.

At Tanana she was happy in the belief that Litchfield was convalescent and, in a few days, would be himself. Takihusha had diagnosed the ailment as a specialist might have done. It was heart weakness, or degeneration, and recurrent attacks were to be expected. Undue exertion or the least excitement would be perilous. Therefore, the little man, concealing his anxiety, begrudged the loss of any time in reaching their destination. He was constantly at the wheel, save for a tie-up of four hours at night, and displayed extraordinary skill in manipulating the combined crafts and steering a safe course through the muddy, uncertain channel. Steamers invariably employed Indian pilots on this stretch of the river and through the flats farther on, because of the changing channel, but Taki was familiar with every crook and turn and needed no aid. Going with the strong current, he made fast time for two days, but after deftly turning the boats into the Koyukuk progress up-stream was difficult and slow and consumed three full days.

Litchfield required constant care on the part of the girl. His fever was gone, but he could not sleep and for hours would lie in a semi-stupor. When she read to him, he did not follow the reading and often his mind wandered. In one of his brighter intervals, just before leaving the Yukon, he fretted about a dog he had left on the Kuskokwim and, at his suggestion, she wrote a letter for him to "Sandy" Colburn, at Akiak, telling him to care for the animal and not allow it to leave his custody. Taki hailed a native fisherman and gave him the letter to post at Kaltag. This eased the old man's mind, as he valued

the dog next to his boat, but his restlessness returned and he worried over unknow things.

Once, on the Koyukuk, in a troubled sleep, he shouted out and started to rise in seeming delirium. It frightened her and, unable to soothe and quiet him, she was moved to call Taki, but hesitated. Uncertain what to do, without design or forethought, when her alarm was at its height, unconsciously, in keeping with her feeling, she began to hum, scarcely above a whisper, the melody he loved. The effect was magical. Instantly he was at peace and in complete repose. She crooned on and on, and presently his hand relaxed and he seemed asleep. A minute later she stopped in the middle of the refrain.

"Sing, child—please sing," he pleaded in husky voice that roused her.

She resumed the soft, sweet notes and kept on dutifully until he passed into dreamland.

That night he slept soundly for the first and only time since his collapse at Rampart and awoke refreshed in the morning.

When she elatedly told Taki, he was pleased, but sententiously cautious in his comment.

"Ver' good, yes. Better, yes. But he mus' res' and be ver' quiet days and days yet, yes," said the little man.

The patient was obedient usually and ever gentle with the girl, but in his brighter and better interludes would declare he was all right and insist upon leaving his bed. He half lost his temper that morning because Taki would not stay and discuss business with him. The lien on the boat was evidently bothering him. Taki was kindly, but put him off with a peremptory, "Not today, Ves, no," and went out.

The trading post or ranch was on the left bank of the Koyukuk, 150 miles from its confluence with the

Yukon above Nulato, and here they arrived the evening of the fifth day from Tanana and were soon comfortably, if crudely, installed for an indefinite stay. Taki's rambling log shack consisted of a fair-sized, well-stocked storeroom, heated in Winter by a large base burner situated in the center, with a cook stove and kitchen appurtenances in the rear, and two smaller rooms adjacent, cut off with thin partitions reaching six feet toward the unadorned ceiling. Outwardly, the shack, like Taki's boat, was unattractive, but the interior, like the boat's, was the acme of neatness and orderliness. Everything was in its proper place, with space adroitly conserved. A cache on the hillside, beyond a garden, which had been intensively productive during the Summer, was filled with provisions for the closed season.

Adaptable, and seeing in a twinkling how she could transform the rooms into cozy apartments, Lyle Blake set up house-keeping there the morning after their arrival. At first she demurred to leaving the boat, but Taki told her that it must be beached and overhauled and that the house provided greater conveniences. She did not then know that shortly the river would be frozen and they might be forced to remain there for long dark months.

A rolling chair was improvised by the resourceful Taki to convey Litchfield to the shack. He was almost helpless, but uncomplaining, and made a pitiful effort to smile and beam upon the girl as formerly. She cheerily attended him, and Taki, with abnormal strength, carefully lifted him into the clean bed prepared for him. Although spared the slightest exertion, he sank heavily upon mattress and pillow, completely exhausted.

To Taki womankind had been typified by uncouth squaws and unkempt Indian girls and a masterful

female prospector who sometimes drove hard bargains with him. For twenty years as cook in mining camps and on the trails, from Nome to Ruby and the Iditarod and on the Koyukuk, he had rarely seen other types. His contact was with the rougher side of life. Lyle Blake was a revelation, and he continued to be in awe of her and embarrassed in her presence. When he sought to speak he became confused, and she understood him by his motions rather than by his words. Uncannily, however, he anticipated every need and was devoted to her and the sick man. Quick and cat-like in his movements, unobtrusive, he was careful never to enter the rooms unawares and startle her.

She marvelled at Taki's politeness, as she had at Litchfield's courtliness and evidence of good breeding. How men could pass their mature lives in the wilds, away from all refinements, and retain their gentleness and polish, puzzled her. Knowledge of rudeness encountered in cities, where people, crowded and hurrying, were indifferent toward fellow human beings, also crowded and hurrying, intensified her admiration of this frontier land. Tranquility and time to think were manifestly required to bring out one's finer qualities. Unenlightened folks thought Alaska uncivilized! For shame! Why its civilization, even in the wilds, was of the highest and best order. Takihusha was sixty years old, at least, she reckoned, and must have belonged to a high-caste family or served in a cultured household. Upon no other hyopthesis could she explain the little man. But why was he so far from kith and kin? Taki's case mystified her, as did Litchfield's, and others of which she had heard. Home was the essence of life. Without home ties life was empty. She could not conceive such an existence.

Poor old man! His wretched loneliness and longing disclosed all too sadly the heavy price his exile had cost him. Holding his hand, while he slumbered fitfully, as thoughts of life's mysteries and contradictions came and went, she pitied and loved him deeply and was more closely drawn to him than ever before.

Takihusha clearly foresaw that the end might occur at any time. The recurrent attacks which he had expected now came with increasing and alarming frequency. His diagnosis had been correct. An unforgotten course in therapeutics in his youth at Yokohama, in preparation to succeed his father as a doctor, when fate and fortune smiled upon him—long, long ago, before poverty overtook him and sent him in steerage to San Francisco and thence with a fishing fleet to this strange land—accounted for Taki's knowledge of bodily ills and cures.

Trade at his obscure post was never large, but thrift had made it profitable. At this time business was inconsequential. Miners were out in the hills and on the creeks making their clean-ups. Small boats going down the river passed without stopping. Occasionally a wandering native would come in a canoe and stolidly make a trifling purchase and depart. It was in the Winter season and early Spring, when the use of dog teams brought the scattered inhabitants into closer touch, that his trading prospered. Now extreme solitude prevailed.

Over the hill lived an industrious half-breed who appeared regularly for work and worked diligently when needed. He had kept a watchful eye for trespassers in Taki's absence. The odd jobs given him, added to the sales of ermine and mink skins, from time to time, enabled him to eke out a livelihood, and he was dependable. Now he was employed putting the boats in dry dock.

Taki himself, however, performed nine-tenths of the work. He was constantly doing something with ease and efficiency. As cook he prepared dainty and appetizing dishes and prescribed and enforced the old man's diet with expert care. Ptarmigan and grouse were plentiful, and his larder in the cache was supplied with caribou meat. He made delicious pastries which delighted the girl, and found manifest pleasure daily in producing surprises at the table. He was still timid and embarrassed and avoided sitting at meals with her.

Her duties as nurse were less exacting and arduous than during the last week on the boat. Often he would relieve her at the bedside when she was not weary, insisting that she needed the air and sunshine.

One afternoon, while he was resting under Taki's vigil and she had been out for an hour communing with nature and bringing her diary up to date, upon returning she found them in deep and earnest conference. A motion from Taki at the door indicated they they desired to be alone, and she withdrew. Another hour elapsed.

The invalid was singularly calm and contained when she joined him, his worries temporarily gone; but she, in the interim, had acquired an intense worry of her own and was so distraught that he detected it and asked solicitously:

"My dear child, what is troubling you?"

"Oh, nothing, nothing," she answered, and forced a return of her natural self, to his relief.

She told him what a beautiful day it was, of the charming blue sky and how she had revelled in the sunshine and enjoyed inspecting Taki's curios and fossils. Her assumed happiness gave him happiness, and he followed her chatter eagerly, beaming upon her somewhat as of old, but sadly and weakly. He

looked, as she had repeatedly observed on the river, as if there was something he wanted to say, but could not. She did not encourage him to talk, but diverted him, and was glad when Taki took her place and she was no longer compelled to dissemble.

Her preoccupation and distress of mind were due to the sudden realization that over two weeks had gone by since their arrival. She should be at Fairbanks. Absorbed in her duties, beautifying the rooms, giving tender and unremitting care to the patient sufferer, whose recurrent relapses left him weaker and weaker, she had lost all sense of time. On the boat, where there was no calendar, she had relied upon her diary for dates, and counted the days as she chronicled the happenings. But opportunity to write had recently been lacking. Her mind was charged with things she intended to set down, but in the stress of adjustment to their new habitat the record had lagged. In making up this deficiency in the afternoon, while the conference indoors was going on, the fact had come upon her with stunning force and shock that the school year must have opened. And she was not there! What should she or could she do? She was harassed by the quandary. The superintendent knew that she was on the way. She had written that she was starting. Naturally there would be inquiry by telegraph. Oh, her poor mother! She would imagine all manner of terrible things. In some way she must get word to her that she was safe. She could not leave the old man, even if she could reach Fairbanks. It would kill him to have her go. And it was too late now, anyway. She asked Taki for a calendar and he found one in a drawer. It verified the diary, showing that September was half gone. How dreadful! But what could she have done had she known?

She was on the verge of a break-down. The little man came quickly to her and inquired if she was ill. Before she could answer there was a call from the sick room and she rallied and composed herself and hurried within. Again she was compelled to hide her distress and appear happy. He was wide-awake and had become restless. She read and sang to him until midnight.

She was up at dawn, unable to sleep because of her plight, and sought Taki, in suppressed agitation, to help her in her trouble.

How far were they from a telegraph station? And how could it be reached?

Where could she mail a letter? And when would it go out?

Where was Fairbanks? And how much time would be required to get there?

These questions she propounded in rapid succession, in undertone, lest the old man, whose ear was ever alert, hear and be disturbed.

Taki, confused and stammering, answered intelligently. There was a wireless station at Nulato, 170 miles or two days below. A letter mailed there now would catch the last up-river boat, due in eight or ten days, and go out by Nenana and the railroad. Fairbanks was several hundred miles distant—about seven days by boat and rail, he estimated.

How isolated they were! She grasped the fact in consternation.

She made known to him that she must—absolutely must—send a message home at once.

"Ver' soon, yes," he said, sympathetically. "It start quick—today—yes, and be filed Nulato Thursday morning, yes."

Instantly resourceful, he summoned the faithful half-breed and told him to get his canoe ready to

*"In the long nights the howling of the dogs gave her fits of melancholy. * * * When over-boisterous, Taki would go out and quiet them."* [p. 206]

carry a telegram to Nulato. The errand pleased him. He had relatives down the river.

She wrote a ten-word message to her mother, saying, "Unable to reach Fairbanks. Am writing. Do not worry. Well," and signed it "Lyle."

Then, hurriedly, she added a few lines to a letter she had been writing piece-meal and closed and stamped it for mailing.

The cost of a wireless telegram to Indiana was uncertain. She offered Taki a bill, but the old man, day after day, had enjoined him not to allow her to want for anything and he declined it. Her insistence was unavailing.

The half-breed was soon prepared to start. Such a trip was of no particular moment to him. He had made longer journeys on shorter notice.

Taki went to the boat with him and gave him the message, letter and money, with instructions in few words what to do, and told him to be back in a week.

From the doorway Lyle watched him as he set off and until he disappeared around the bend in the river.

Relieved, she was yet unrelieved. She blamed herself for the loss of time. Why had she not sent a message days ago? She bemoaned her forgetfulness, and called it negligence. Already, she knew, it had cost her mother heart-aches and tears. What if the papers should hear of her supposed disappearance and make a sensation out of it! Pitying herself, silently she implored the Lord to pity and help her. She should, it occurred to her, have sent a telegram to Fairbanks. It was too late now. And what could she have said in explanation of her non-appearance? Letters awaited her there. She might have wired for them. But they would not come for a month. Surely she would not be here that long!

Taki was attending the old man and she went to the water and strolled on the shore. Gradually she grew calm. Nature was smiling and dispelled her gloom. The environment was not as pleasing to the eye as settings on the upper Yukon which so enraptured her, but the greatness of the country, its endless expanse, impressed her, and the solitude brought her peace. She felt that God had directed her hither and it was His will that she be here. Therefore, she must accept her lot and be happy in the service given her to do. Very soon her mother—dear soul!—would receive her message and be reassured. Having told her not to worry, she herself should cease worrying.

The two gas boats had been pulled up on land, on either side of the path leading to the house, and a covering was being built for the sightly Lyle Blake to protect it. Its exterior had been cleaned and painted, in part, and the craft stood out beautifully in the sun-light. The attention it was receiving gratified her, but she realized that it was now out of use for the season. She climbed aboard and sat in the dismantled cabin, and lived over the wonderful journey she had made therein. The evening at Whitehorse came back to her vividly. How kind and patient he was! And how he had really needed her! She would not leave him, if she could. It would be heartless and inhuman. Her mother would see and say that she had done her simple duty when she knew.

Wayne Roberts was not out of her thoughts. She hoped he had not heard of her failure to reach Fairbanks. What would he think! But she dismissed this lightly. He was too busy to be thinking about her and, no doubt, had finished his work and left Alaska by this time. She was so light-hearted and happy when they were together on the Lynn Canal

and at Haines and Skagway, never remotely dreaming of any such experience as this in store for her, and she wondered whether she would ever again be as free from care. Whatever came, however, she would be cheerful with the old man and brighten his life as best she could.

Resolutely she returned to the house and resumed her place at his bedside and bravely read to him and gladdened him with her chatter.

As September waned long twilight and early dawn gave place to the seasonal darkness of which she had read about and dreaded. Taki and the half-breed worked longer hours and harder and harder, preparing for the freeze-up. The covering for the boat was completed and the cache replenished with game and made secure against wolves and other predatory animals abounding thereabout. Huge stacks of wood were cut and hauled and sheltered, and, finally, in the middle of October, the windows were boarded and sealed to insure warmth within. This necessitated at once the continuous use of oil lamps. The weather was still mild, with not a sign of snow, but falling temperature and storm might come unawares and Taki was equipped for the elements. Solicitude for the comfort of the invalid and the girl prompted unusual safe-guards and precautions.

Cherishing the recollection of the midnight sun which shone so gloriously on the Yukon, Lyle watched these preparations with dismay and awaited the coming of Winter in trepidation. The increasing darkness depressed her and she maintained her cheerful demeanor with effort.

Taki and the half-breed jointly owned a team of dogs, eight in number, which had been in the half-breed's care during the Summer. The leader, a well-trained malamute, belonged to Taki. They were

now driven over the hill and came yelping to the house to be stabled in an out-building.

A dog team was a novelty to the girl and she was excitedly interested.

Taki's tongue loosened in giving orders, and he put the team through some movements for her entertainment and brought out a big sled for inspection. She enthusiastically made friends of the animals. They snapped and snarled, but did not attempt to bite. Taki kept alertly near on guard. The leader jumped up at her in joyful, hearty greeting. In anticipation of an experience behind a dog team, which she craved from the moment she started to Alaska, the approaching freeze-up became less forbidding in its aspect.

But in the long nights the howling of the dogs gave her fits of melancholy and unutterable loneliness and she felt out of the world. When overboisterous Taki would go out and quiet them. Accustomed to Winter life and the canine chorus accompaniment, the old man was undisturbed and once dryly remarked that it was like orchestral music to his ears. But to her the barking was nerve-racking and often made the night hideous.

Taki previously had shown her fur garments in his limited stock, and he now surprised her with a parka, made expressly for her by the half-breed's squaw, from reindeer hide, at his direction. She put it on and went in to let the old man see. It was somewhat large and gave her a clumsy appearance, which amused him, but Taki said it was "ver' nice fit, yes," and grinned in pleasure; and she, flitting about in the odd garb, forgot the nightly barking and depressing darkness and was eager for snow and ice to come.

October was dismal. The shortening days were overcast, and sometimes lightless. When the sun ap-

peared it disappeared quickly. An almost perpetual gloom had come upon them and added to the solitude. Daily it was more difficult to be cheerful, and the barking more distressing. She longed for her mother and busied herself at the lamp writing a long letter to her which she could not mail. There was naught to inscribe in her diary except troubled thoughts. She read and talked to the old man absentmindedly. Oh, for the light—God's sunlight! It was life to her. She could not live without it. The Bible no longer solaced her. There was only one other book in the house—Dr. S. Hall Young's adventures with John Muir—and three old magazines, and these she had read over and over. She was not rebellious, but disspirited. Then the full moon developed and brightened the nights and illuminated the vista and dispelled her gloom. It was too wonderful for words. Night after night she stood in the doorway spellbound. She wanted the old man to see it, but the window was tightly closed and excluded even the faintest rays. She told him of its beauties and he was pleased. But it dwindled all too soon into half moon and quarter moon and the gloom returned. Thereafter she found contentment watching it get larger and larger and growing into a full orb anew.

A fateful night late in the month banished her moods and brought to her a realization that, when she recovered from the daze of it and could believe and comprehend, centered and concentrated her thoughts in the dear old man, and from that night on she was unmindful of barking dogs and the darkness, and her sole concern was for him, that he might be given peace and happiness and granted life.

She had been outside absorbed in the splendor of the moon and was dreamily reviewing her experiences when Taki, who was going to look after the

dogs, came to the door and called her. He had been in the sickroom since early evening. The invalid had passed a restful, quiet day and was much brighter and stronger when she left him. Responding promptly, fearing another relapse, she was astonished to find him propped in a pillowed chair, clean-shaven, his toilet carefully made, and looking his old self, save for feebleness and pallor. She could scarcely credit the sight and for an instant stood stupified. A miracle seemed to have happened.

"Oh, my dear Mr. Sourdough!" she exclaimed. "You have really come back to me."

"Daughter, dear," he said, his voice clear, but weak, "I have something to say to you and shall tell you all."

Daughter! Always hitherto he had affectionately called her child. She marvelled at the new endearment and momentarily thought his mind wandering.

She seated herself on the arm of his chair and took his hand and pressed closely to him.

"My daughter, child of mine, my very own," he continued earnestly, "I praise God for giving you to me. He sent you to your lonely, lost father."

Daughter! Father! He was in a delusion, she thought.

"I have missed my father, dear Mr. Sourdough," she said, "but you have been a father to me and I love you."

"Daughter, I am truly your father. You came to me when I was young, but I went from you. I loved you then as I love you now and have ever loved your dear mother," and he drew her to him.

"But, dear Mr. Sourdough, my father died when I was three," she said, dazed and groping.

She was convulsed in pity for him, convinced that his illness had produced an hallucination.

Perfectly composed, his strength growing with the test he had tried for many days to meet, he reached to the stand and handed her a faded photograph.

"My mother!"

She put it to her lips and wept over it.

"My mother—my dear little mother."

The picture, taken twenty-five years ago, was like a treasured one at home. Her sweet, beautiful mother! She fixed her gaze upon it, confused and speechless and unable to think.

He watched her lovingly in silence.

"I do not understand," presently she said.

He took the picture and turned the reverse side. It bore an almost invisible inscription in a hand she knew so well. "To my dear husband, Harold, on his thirty-fifth birthday," with the date, "January 9th, 1899," written beneath.

Instantly she recalled the faded writing on the fly-leaf of his Bible—"To my beloved son Harry," and signed "Mother." Her father was called Harry in his boyhood and youth, she had been told, but her mother preferred Harold, and she, too, had become attached to that name above all others.

Divining her thoughts, the old man, with infinite gentleness, said:

"I know, dear daughter, how hard it is for you to accept the truth and understand. I have, indeed, been dead to you and to your good mother all these years. I went away and did not come back, but you came to me, and now, if it please God, I shall live for you, or die happy, if it be His will. Listen, child, daughter, and let me tell you."

Calmly, without emotion, simply and briefly, he disclosed to her the tragedy of his early life. He had

erred and brought grief and humiliation to his loved ones and disgrace upon himself and, in bitter remorse, had gone from them and come to this new land to be forgotten until he could earn an honest fortune and return. Mistakenly, aimlessly, when he became a wanderer and felt himself an outcast, he had taken another name and it had clung to him. Varying fortune had been his lot. He had never been in want, but his ventures had continually gone wrong. Yet he had managed to send a little money home. Not an unearned dollar had he ever transmitted. Otherwise he might have sent more. Every day throughout his self-imposed exile he had longed for wife and child, and again and again been on the point of starting to them, but something intervened.

He said nothing by way of extenuation other than that he had lived a clean life.

"And you knew at Whitehorse?" she asked, when he finished and sank back in the chair.

"The register told me, daughter dear, and our walk to the rapids confirmed it."

"Why, why did you not tell me?"

Brokenly he confessed his weakness and cowardice and told of the contraband cargo and the unmailed letters and his fear of the authorities, and how he had suffered and been overcome with regret, and vainly endeavored to open his heart to her all the way down the river.

He was breathing heavily now and showing symptoms of exhaustion.

"Poor Mr. Sourdough!" she said.

She took the Bible and read to him her favorite Pslam, and knelt at his knee and said a prayer, and kissed him good night.

Taki had not retired. She called him. He understood, and came quickly.

"From that night on she was unmindful of barking dogs and the darkness, and her sole concern was for him, that he be given peace and happiness and granted life." [p. 207]

PART III

CHAPTER XVI.

MUSHING OVER RAINY PASS

PASSIONATELY fond of the outdoors, courageous and congenial, Mark Field and Wayne Roberts confidently set out afoot upon their long journey to the Kuskokwim country, with no dread of the rough-going ahead or misgivings as to the success of their mission. The fact that Roberts had been brought into the search for the missing teacher occasioned no chagrin or disappointment on Field's part. He understood and welcomed him.

Upon leaving the Governor they quickly completed their plans. Roberts on the train had suggested the hiring of a pair of horses to facilitate the trip, but Field at once pronounced this impracticable. There was no forage on the trail. Roadhouses were provided with feed for dog teams, but none for horses, and, moreover, their use would save little, if any, time. A man could go through swamps and over the summit easier than a horse and with greater safety. After the freeze-up a dog team was the best mode of transit, and this would be their means of return, naturally.

"How long shall we be on the way?" Roberts asked. He was undaunted by the prospect and indifferent to personal discomforts, but felt that speed was urgent.

"Three weeks probably," said Field. "This may be shortened a few days, if we have good luck."

Field was at home on the trail. He had mushed over it in Summer and driven dog teams over it in Winter, time after time, under all conditions of road

and weather. Now, with a favorable Autumn climate and good company, it would be a holiday jaunt, but for its serious purpose. The best possible headway must be made, but he realized that this would necessarily be restricted to an average of twenty miles a day. Having lost many days on the Yukon, he shared Roberts' wish to conserve every hour and turn it to account.

The younger man was not a tenderfoot, but readily adaptable and resourceful, and surprisingly well informed. He had made it his business to learn. By diligent study of maps he had acquainted himself with the courses of rivers, the ranges of mountains and the location of towns. Heart interest stimulated his aptitude for learning. Topographically and geographically he knew Alaska. Physically he was in perfect form. His experience in mining camps in Colorado, Nevada and British Columbia, and war service overseas, had seasoned and hardened him for any task. By nature, though Eastern-born and college-bred, he was a frontiersman, and adept at following the trail. His good nature never flagged. Field's admiration of him grew.

Starting from the station Nancy, early in the morning, and destined for Susitna, twenty-four miles, they skirted the beautiful lake of that name and kept a steady gait for hours over the low, swamp land, past ponds and small lakes, and through scrub spruce timber. At intervals they rested briefly, but reached Susitna easily in the evening. Here they stopped overnight, and had good meals and beds at Mrs. Johnson's road-house.

With Breakfast at six, they were rowed across the Susitna River and during the day made twenty miles

over heavily timbered, rolling hills to Lakewood, where they bunked the next night.

The third day, again traveling twenty miles, brought them to Skeentna, picturesquely situated upon the river of that name, where the road-house keeper, M'Elroy, once chef of a large hotel outside, provided them bountiful meals and private rooms. They were sore and tired and the difficult summit was yet to be negotiated.

From Susitna onward, except when making their way through timber, they had had magnificent views of the towering mountains ahead. Mt. Dall, 9,000 feet; Mt. Russel, 11,600 feet; Mt. Foraker, 17,000, and Mt. M'Kinley, 20,300 feet, snow covered, stood out beautifully white and majestic.

Atmospheric conditions occasionally brought the great peaks close to view, which reminded Field that, under like conditions, he had seen Mt. Rainier (or Tahoma) when it seemed just across Elliot Bay from Seattle. Roberts said that he had often witnessed the same phenomena in connection with Pike's Peak. He declared the Alaska range, which they were approaching, surpassed the Alps in grandeur.

The fourth day they journeyed to Mountain Climbers, twenty miles farther, where the primitive bunks, after their hard tramp, insured a restful sleep. The name of this road-house told that mountain climbing began there, and, sitting at the fire in the one-room domicile, the tired, but cheerful, travelers speculated upon the wisdom of starting before daybreak in the hope of reaching Rainy Pass the following night. It was forty-nine miles away. They thought they might make it, and Roberts was willing to try, but their better judgment prevailed.

"Claus will take good care of you," said a trail-blazer sitting in the corner.

"Sure," answered Field. "Claus Anderson is the friend of every traveler on the trail."

At six o'clock in the morning, after a breakfast of sourdough hot cakes, they started to Happy River. The first ten-mile lap led through a low and flat, slowly-rising land of swamps and lakes and scrub spurce, and the second lap of eleven miles over rolling hills, heavily timbered with spruce. Nine hours of steady going were required, and they were then ready to call it a day and rest at Orie Barnhart's, preparatory to the difficult, sometimes hazardous, ascent now near at hand. He advised them to give at least fourteen hours to the trip to the pass, and be underway by dawn, to which they gave heed.

Up, up, up, Field led the way, climbing hill after hill and traversing steep, densely timbered benches. Roberts kept close behind. At intervals upon level surfaces they halted and rested and talked. Noon and mid-afternoon came quickly. Field reckoned they were making two miles an hour. If maintained, this progress would put them into Claus Anderson's hospitable keeping by six or seven o'clock. But it could not be maintained. The last eight miles of the twenty-eight, he knew, were the hardest. These crossed a high, barren bench on the left limit of Happy River. On this short, perilous stretch of the ascending trail men had lost their lives in snow storms which raged furiously in Winter. The roadhouse was a veritable haven. But for it the elements would take heavier toll.

Fortunately the weather now was clear and mild, and, if delayed into the night, a full moon would light them on the dangerous way.

Roberts was enraptured by the rugged scenery, and Field, also, although it was far surpassed, he said, by the Winter view. He had come over the

pass by dog team in zero weather and enjoyed the experience. "But," he added, "deliver me from a snow storm in the region of the summit."

Cautiously they went on and on. Their feet dragged. The sky was glorious, but they were too weary to appreciate it. Not until near midnight did Claus' light in the window appear and bring them safely to his haven.

He greeted Field as a long-lost brother and at once made Roberts his tillicum. Supper was speedily served and hungrily relished. He had only bunks to offer, but these were as inviting as the most exquisite suite of the costliest hotel, and he as attentive as the ubiquitous boniface of a Swiss chalet. Their unspoken needs were anticipated and forthcoming, including hot water to bathe their sore feet; and they slept the good sleep of the trail.

From Rainy Pass to Rhone River, on the seventh day, was twenty-two miles. Experience had taught them the folly of considering a longer lap than between road-houses. The season was late for Siwashing and they were not carrying packs. They had averaged twenty-two miles a day for six days and plainly could do no more. Roberts now realized fully that horses would not have facilitated, but, in many places, impeded their journey, especially through the swamps and over soft tundra.

They resumed their mushing with heavy limbs which lightened as they resolutely pushed onward and upward. For twelve miles to the summit the climb of the barren trail was difficult. Then it led down through a gulch between steep, jagged mountains and into the Dalzelle Canyon, continuing through a heavy growth of spruce to the mouth of Dalzelle Creek, which empties, four miles below, into the Rhone River, a tributary of the south fork

of the Kuskokwim. The Rhone River road-house, kept by Bob Jones and Jim Davidson, trailsmen of repute, on an island, in the very heart of a forest of big spruce, surmounted on all sides by high jagged mountains, revealed itself in wonderful picturesqueness and beckoned to the buoyant, if weary, wayfarers alluringly. Here they feasted and rested for the night. Moose, caribou and mountain sheep abound hereabout.

"And now for French Joe's," said Field to Roberts, as they set out on their eighth day's twenty-mile jaunt.

He had previously told him of this interesting character, Joseph Blanchell, a French Canadian, long identified with the trail and known throughout the Territory, whose road-house, the mecca of storm-ridden travellers, was famed for its table and superior accommodations. It had several cabins detached from the main building for use by sojourners desiring temporary homes. In the road-house proper were private rooms, and its bunks were partitioned off and screened. Big game hunters, as well as sourdoughs, had spread the fame of French Joe's. For hardships and perils encountered they were here rewarded with choice meats and fresh fruits the seasons through. How he managed it all, so far removed from base of supplies, puzzled one and all alike, and was a question never answered.

Zest was given this lap of the jaunt by the anticipated comforts in store for the stout-hearted mushers. Tirelessly and without a rest they followed the safer land trail along the left limit of the south fork of the Kuskokwim, and reached Joe's, tired and hungry, but in fine spirits, early in the evening. Field, as usual, received a glad welcome from the pro-

prietor, and likewise a frontier greeting from Iditarod friends mushing the trail in the other direction.

Often, in severe weather, travellers were compelled to lay over here, sometimes for a week. Otherwise it was a favorite tarrying place for men not pressed for time. They liked its atmosphere of cheer and thrived upon the viands. In the big world outside such an establishment might be denied popular recognition and renown, but, off in the almost impenetrable wilderness, French Joe's was unique and impressive—a Ritz or Waldorf in the rough. To Roberts, accustomed to the dead-level sameness of hotel life in cities, it was of peculiar charm because so different.

With a week's growth of beard, their khaki garb, slickers and macintoshes brown with dust and their boots and leggings bespattered with mud, the young men bore abundant credentials of the wilds. Immediately they were pressed with questions touching their experiences and conditions on the trail.

Roberts, his dark hirsute giving him the look of a Spaniard, was preparing to use his razor, but Field dissuaded him. Beard was a protection and, besides, he insisted, it was becoming to him. He himself, less bewhiskered, was equally tanned and weatherbeaten. Water, soap and towel, vigorously applied, made them recognizable and presentable and whetted their appetites for the wholesome supper quickly made ready. Other wayfarers had eaten hours before.

The big lounging-room, with rustic, commodious benches and chairs, though not overheated, was heavy with the fumes of tobacco, and the new-comers went outside to smoke cigarettes. Joe, ever watchful, called them back and opened a window and threw wide the door.

A general talk ensued, in which Roberts participated as a keen, absorbent listener.

One of the men from Iditarod had lately been down the Yukon to Holy Cross, temporarily empowered by a commissioner to serve a legal paper, and spoke of men he had met, all of whom were known to Field, who inquired casually:

"Did you happen to learn whether Wes Litchfield had returned?"

"He is operating on the upper river," said the man. "He was in Circle late in July, according to a letter from the deputy there."

"Operating in what—wet goods or cards?" asked one of the group, facetiously.

"No; carrying cargo on his gas boat," answered the man. "With poor transportation service, his Summer should have been a profitable one. He was taking a teacher into the interior as far as Tanana."

Field and Roberts were alert and intensely interested. But the man had told all he knew. Casual interrogation yielded nothing further.

Retiring, they discussed the information thus obtained by merest chance and speculated upon its meaning. Field was deeply disturbed. It reflected upon his vigilance. If Litchfield was at Circle in July, how could he have passed Dawson and Eagle without leaving the slightest trace? It was inexplicable. Field's quest on the upper Yukon was in August. Obviously, if Litchfield was taking Lyle Blake to Tanana, en route to Fairbanks, he would have secured her trunk at Dawson and then he could not pass Eagle without showing his clearance papers.

Field remembered, regretfully, that his stops at Circle and Ft. Yukon had been brief and his inquiries somewhat perfunctory, but recalled with satisfaction that he had left nothing undone at Tanana.

There he had unexpectedly come upon a faint clue in the episode of the supposed boy crossing the river in a skiff and going into town.

Because of Field's worry Roberts assumed a confidence he did not actually feel at the moment, and cheered him with the assurance that he had done all he himself or any other man could have done under the circumstances. Weary and in need of sleep, they were wide-awake and talked until the night was far gone. The indication that Litchfield had not come down the river meant a probable change of their itinerary. Upon reaching M'Grath they would decide upon the best course to pursue. Their rest at French Joe's was broken.

To Peluk, the ninth day, was another twenty miles, the first ten over a low, rolling country and the last through flat, barren land, and Frank Ciolio made them comfortable.

The evening of the tenth day brought them to the Salmon Creek road-house, the entire distance (twenty miles) traversed being over tundra and through scrub spruce and around numerous lakes.

From Salmon Creek to Big River road-house half of the twenty miles was over swamps and half through heavy spruce. The road-house, at the mouth of the Big River, which flows into the main Kuskokwim, is known as Berry's Landing and run by Arthur Berry, one of the greatest hunters of the interior.

From Big River the trail followed the main Kuskokwim for twenty-five miles to the town of M'Grath, situated on the main Kuskokwim where the Tacotna River empties into it—the head of navigation on the Kuskokwim. Freight is shipped direct from Seattle to Bethel by ocean boats, which transfer their cargoes to river steamers such as run on the Yukon, and other small craft. From Bethel to

M'Grath freight is thus taken a distance of 500 miles. The Kuskokwim is one of the most beautiful rivers in all Alaska, and easy to navigate. M'Grath has a thrice-weekly newspaper, the Kusko Times, and is the natural distributing point for the Upper Kuskokwim and all its branches, the Nixon Forks country, the Tacotna and Ophir district and the Candle Creek district. The chief industries are placer and quartz mining, fur trading, lumbering, agriculture and transportation. Here the travellers began to feel in touch with the world.

Tacotna, their destination of the thirteenth day, twenty-two miles from M'Grath, was reached by a gas boat, shoving a loaded barge, on the Tacotna River. Tacotna, a fur-trading and logging point and placer and quartz mining center, provided road-house accommodations with a bath.

Ophir, eighteen miles farther, put them on the Yukon watershed, with the Kuskokwim left behind. Here Ophir Creek, which empties into the Innoka, tributary to the Yukon, near Holy Cross, was reached. In the heart of the Innoka mining district, where individual miners have given way largely to operating companies, Ophir, which also deals in furs, presented unusual activity for so small a town.

By adhering to their original plan they would have quit the trail at M'Grath and gone by steamer down the Kuskokwim to Bethel, as Litchfield usually spent his winters in that region, but it now seemed plain that their search must be prosecuted along the Yukon. Hence they had come from M'Grath to Ophir, resolved to reach the greater river with all possible dispatch by the use of a poling boat, with an Evinrude motor, in Ophir Creek to its mouth in the Innoka and thence on down that navigable river to its exit into the Yukon near Holy Cross.

Again Roberts demonstrated his ready resourcefulness. A poling boat was new to him, but he proved a strong and willing hand in operating and utilizing it, and the best co-worker in emergencies that Field, a skilled poler, ever had.

Progress was slow and difficult in the creek, but once out of it and into the Innoka headway increased and was steadily maintained. Coffee and hard tack supplied their bodily wants, and their cheerfulness never ebbed.

Roberts repeatedly emphasized the value he put upon his experience on the trail. But for the urgency of duty, he said, he would like nothing better than to continue it to the end. Their fourteen days of mushing would ever be memorable and the prospect of returning by dog team, their mission accomplished, elated him. The lure of this wonderful land would be with him always, and he hoped sometime to spend a whole year exploring its fastnesses and extending his acquaintance among the road-house keepers.

Field told him of Twitchell's great herd of reindeer at Jerry Winn's, thirty-three miles from Ophir, on the trail; of Shirmeire's, twenty-five miles farther; of Iditarod City, on Iditarod River, sixteen miles beyond, and of Flat City, then only eight miles distant. All these would have interested him deeply, he was sure, and he gave him in brief the history of the immediate country.

"Iditarod sprang into fame in 1910. In the Winter of 1908-09 William Dykeman and John Beaton found pay prospects and located claims on Discovery Otter Creek, as now known. Going down the Iditarod River in the Spring to the Yukon, at Holy Cross, to secure supplies for the coming season, the news of their strike leaked and spread throughout Alaska.

"A stampede toward the diggings ensued in the Summer and Fall of 1909. All along the Iditarod River for a hundred miles stampeders were halted by the early freeze-up, and established temporary villages. Early in the Winter they proceeded over the snow to the diggings.

"Discoveries in the months following on Flat Creek, Willow Creek and in Glenn Gulch, on Black Creek, tributaries to Otter Creek, produced a second stampede in the Spring of 1910 and the City of Iditarod came into being. Its population, first living in tents on the banks of the river, soon numbered 5,000, and no time was lost in laying out streets and erecting modern and substantial buildings such as would have been creditable to an old community in the States. Wholesale and retail business thrived, and a Territorial bank was solidly founded and still exists. Steamboats and gasoline launches of all types available were taxed to their capacity bringing passengers and provisions from the Yukon, and in the lack of docks cargoes were deposited on the river bank wherever space could be found.

"Then it was that J. F. A. Strong, who, a few years later, became Governor of Alaska, started a newspaper there and in its first issue editorially proclaimed: 'Amongst the moss and niggerhead there arose an empire.'

"The camp from 1910 to 1920 produced $18,380,000 in gold. But the glory of Iditarod City was short-lived. Once, so promising and spectacular, today it is a sad sight, most of its buildings have been torn away. Only the bank, a commercial company's store and a road-house remain, and the latest population figures indicated only a dozen souls.

"Flat City, of 250 people, has taken Iditarod City's place. It has the court headquarters, with a

commissioner and deputy marshal, and is well-equipped with stores and restaurants. But Flat City must still do business with the Iditarod bank eight miles away. It refused to move."

Field explained that Flat City's rise was due to dredging operations by a big Eastern corporation which took over individual holdings on Flat Creek and there produced ore valued at $14,000,000. It finished its dredging in 1920. Two dredges are still at work on Otter Creek.

Roberts knew, in a general way, about the Iditarod, and once, he said, in 1915, he was about to be sent there to examine some properties when the war intervened.

Field reckoned aright as to the time required to reach Holy Cross. They crossed the Yukon to the mission late in the evening of the fourth day.

Upon inquiry at the wireless station the next morning Field received a code dispatch from the Governor, relayed from Iditarod by the bank under direction from Juneau to locate the travelers. It told of the message from the girl to her mother, filed at Nulato early in August and forwarded by mail from Indiana to Alaska, in which she said she was unable to reach Fairbanks and not to worry.

Promptly translating the code, Field showed it to Roberts. Nulato was 252 miles up the Yukon.

Seven weeks had elapsed since the girl sent the message. Their immediate thought was that she had filed it in passing down the river. This fitted into the clue given Field at Tanana. But why was she unable to reach Fairbanks? If with Litchfield, it was improbable that he would go back up the river after coming to Nulato.

Possibly, after all, Field conjectured, they were mistaken in connecting the old man with her disap-

pearance. It was the only rational theory, he admitted, but, nevertheless, it was unsustained by absolute proof.

Roberts, thinking deeply, remained silent. His belief in the theory was unshaken. The belated development seemed to strengthen it. No other theory was conceivable in his cool philosophy.

Conscious that the freeze-up would come shortly and close the river to navigation, as October was now at hand, the necessity of prompt action was uppermost in their minds. Therefore, it was mutually agreed that Roberts should take the first boat available up to Nulato and Field remain in the lower river country, with Holy Cross as a base, and extend his search to the Kuskokwim. By wireless they could keep in communication and govern their future movements.

Roberts caught a small up-river boat, the last of the season, in the afternoon. Going against the current and with a heavy cargo, the captain said, Nulato could not be reached in less than four days.

Field confirmed the report that Litchfield was at Circle early in July. The deputy marshal at Holy Cross showed him the letter from Circle, confiirmatory of the gossip at French Joe's. This troubled Field anew. He felt he had been derelict. The deputy thought Litchfield might yet appear, but scouted the suggestion that he had gone by unseen.

Unconvinced, and losing no time, Field went down to Russian Mission, stopping at Piemute and Dogfish Village on the way, and then proceeded to Ohagamute below. At none of these river points did he gain the least information. Nobody had seen Litchfield. Common sense told him it was useless to search farther, at Inrumhartmute, Marshall and Takahakmute. He knew the Eskimos of these vil-

lages and throughout the region. Some of them were bright enough to be of real service, but it was plain that Litchfield was not thereabout or in hiding. If he had come down the river and passed Holy Cross unobserved, he had doubtless gone by portage from Russian Mission to the Kuskokwim. But this was inconceivable.

Field returned to Holy Cross and impatiently awaited tidings from above. Not until the seventh day did the wireless bring word from Roberts, who then telegraphed that he thought it advisable to proceed up the river toward Tanana and asked Field to meet him there. Evidently he had gained information indicating that Litchfield was somewhere in that section.

There was no up-river boat. Impatient, Field mushed to Anvik. There he hired an Indian from Shageluk to take him by boat to Nulato. The craft was equipped with two pairs of oars, and, by using them constantly and keeping close to shore, they made headway steadily and reached Nulato, worn-out, in three days. The Indian could not be induced to go farther. He feared the freeze and refused to sell his boat. Thereupon Field provided himself with a pack and a supply of grub and mushed on by the north bank of the Yukon, through Nohtalohton and Yukokakat, to Ruby, where, the day after his arrival, he was joined by Roberts, who had been on a fruitless trip to Chentansitztan, Zakatlatan and other Indian hamlets.

Both had learned at the wireless station at Nulato that Lyle Blake's message was filed and paid for by a river man, to whom she had evidently intrusted it. The agent supposed it came from a passing boat. He remembered the incident well because he first had difficulty figuring the rate to Indiana and later expe-

rienced trouble transmitting the message on account of atmospheric disturbances. It was plainly written in ink in a feminine hand on letter paper. He showed the copy to Roberts, who wanted to keep it, but this was denied him, as it belonged to the files. The agent had given little attention to the man and could not describe him. Coming up the river Roberts had made the closest inquiries and was convinced beyond a lingering doubt that Litchfield had not passed below Nulato. Field shared this view fully, and now, mutually believing the old man had gone back up the river, they agreed that Tanana was the logical base of search.

Ruby, once a thriving mining camp and seeming Eldorado, was all but deserted, its dwellings in decay and some occupied by Indians. At one of these they found the owner of a gas boat and employed him to take them to Tanana.

There they waited and fretted, unable to obtain the slightest clue, beyond that secured by Field weeks before. They were disconcerted and disheartened, and undetermined what course next to pursue. The last boat up the Tanana River to Nenana would be leaving soon. To go there would mean abandonment of the quest and a confession of its failure. Clearly she was not there or thereabout. Roberts was admittedly more anxious and puzzled than ever before. Field constantly blamed himself for failing to find the girl in his initial search on the upper river. Undecided which way to turn, hoping hourly—hoping against hope—that tidings would come from some unexpected quarter, alert and vigilant, they protracted their stay at Tanana.

CHAPTER XVII.

AS THE ICE BEGAN TO FORM

TARRYING at Tanana, Mark Field and Wayne Roberts grew exceedingly restless. It was now early October and the last boats up the Tanana to Nenana and down the Yukon to Holy Cross or St. Michael were making ready to leave ahead of the ice. Why wait here? Surely there was nothing to be gained. Lyle Blake was not here or hereabout. No one had seen or heard of Wes Litchfield in months.

The town was preparing to hibernate for the Winter. Already its small population was ebbing, and only the little detachment of soldiery at Ft. Gibbon kept it alive. A post surgeon, grown gray in the service and soon to go out, and two junior officers, bearing up bravely, but pining for the busy world beyond their early return, gave Field and Roberts incidental companionship and the diverting pastime of checkers and cribbage as they lingered. Field's proficiency in the latter game, his art of pegging and multiplying fifteen-twos and making skillful turns, gave him prestige at the post, where he was recognized as a wizard. Cribbage was his "long suit," he said, and had added to his contentment with life in Alaska. Roberts' favorite game was chess, but there was no foe worthy of his prowess to give him battle.

When one sees the ice come in and go out of the Yukon, the Kuskokwim or other great rivers in Alaska he becomes a Sourdough. The experience qualifies him for the distinction.

Field had seen both repeatedly. Between the

closing and opening of the navigation season he had passed numerous Winters in interior Alaska, at Fairbanks, in the Iditarod district, at Akiak and Bethel, and, in his youth, at Dawson. The freeze-up had no terror for him. It was really the part of the year he enjoyed. He loved to travel with a dog team. The long nights, brightened by the expanse of snow and ice, did not oppress him in the least. He had never suffered seriously from the cold, although frequently he had lost a trail when the mercury marked 40° to 60° below zero. Always his parka and sleeping bag afforded ample protection from the elements. Often he had slept the sleep of a child when the elements raged and howled fiercely. Only the Chechahco, or the foolhardy, unequipped, he insisted, ever fell victim to the weather. Alaska was not unlike Northern Michigan, the Dakotas or Montana in Winter, and its blizzards no more violent. He could face one without a tremor. An electrical storm, however, unknown to the Northland, gave him fear and dread unspeakable. Once in his home town, Toledo, he had been frightened into a veritable frenzy when the very air was charged with electricity and crashing thunder made the hour hideous.

Field recounted incident after incident of experiences in the Northland. His life among the Eskimos deeply interested the younger man, who longed to see and know the strange tribe, whose simple ways, their kindliness and friendliness and generous hospitality, Field extolled so eloquently. Were they a decadent or vanishing race? No; in spite of the toll taken by the influenza epidemic, a few years ago, and the prevalence of tuberculosis among those living in filthy igloos on the Lower Yukon, they were holding their own and making manifest progress. Field estimated that a correct census to date would show an

"The day was cold and clear and Roberts could see that the Eskimo, continually in the lead, acting as pacemaker and pathfinder, was enjoying himself. It was his kind of weather." [p. 238]

Eskimo population of 12,000, approximately the same as a decade ago. The reindeer industry had greatly benefited them and improved their physical condition. Sheldon Jackson rendered an enduring public service when he interested the government in the industry and imported the first herd of reindeer to Alaska, and the Bureau of Education, operating under a heavy handicap in the Territory and inadequately equipped, had achieved great success in conserving and extending the industry. Under the apprenticeship system young Eskimos were educated while serving as herders, and permitted to acquire herds of their own. Alaska would never, as over-enthusiastic persons sometimes predicted, supply the meat market of the world, but would certainly, Field said, figure in that respect largely. The utilization of grazing land—millions of acres—in the Broad Pass country contiguous to the government railroad would hasten the development of the promising industry.

Roberts, disspirited though he was, laughed heartily over an anecdote. One bitter Winter night Field was given refuge in a well-kept igloo at Quinhagak by a kindly native family who, after providing shelter for his dogs, served him tea—the Eskimos buy only the best quality of tea—and otherwise made him comfortable for the night. Desiring to know the name of his host and hostess, he made inquiry, in dialect, of the head of the household.

"Me Adam—him Eve," pointing to the wife, was the prompt response.

Field told of potlatches, still of vogue with the Eskimos, as with the Indians, and which he had attended in the Kuskokwim region. The giving of gifts constitutes a potlatch. An Eskimo, in pursuit of this custom, will periodically announce and

give a potlatch and fairly impoverish himself, bestowing his personal possessions upon friends assembled. But invariably there is an aftermath. The recipients of his prodigal favor, in further pursuance of the custom, in due turn, must themselves give potlatches, and thus possessions pass from one to another, with none allowed to be in want in the interim. The custom, thanks to educational advancement, is not carried to former extremes and is today gradually taking the form of civilized Christmas observance.

"It is my fate to see the ice come in, but I do not wish to become a Sourdough by waiting to see it go out," said Roberts, dogmatically, as he arose, the morning of the fifth day of waiting, at the crude and weather-beaten road-house where they were comfortably lodged. "I shall get away on the next down-river boat."

"Down the river!" exclaimed Field, in surprise.

"Yes, ahead of the ice."

"And I?"

"Remain or proceed to Nenana. It's lost motion now and unprofitable making a search in pair."

Field did not dispute the point.

"How far down the river do you propose to go?" he asked.

"All the way down, if need be," he replied, again dogmatically. "I said I'd find her and I shall keep on the move until I do."

After breakfast, plans mutually matured. They would separate without unnecessary delay, Roberts, on his own determination, going toward the setting and Field toward the rising sun, the one off into the Winter wilds and the other into civilization. Admittedly there was but a single clue to work upon—the girl's message to her mother from Nulato weeks

ago. It seemed to have been exhausted by previous search, but, since she had clearly not come back to Tanana, it was worthy of further probing. Roberts did not divulge it, but a theory possessed him that Lyle Blake was somewhere on the lower Yukon and the Nulato message, evidently filed in passing, he accepted as confiirmatory evidence. How Wes Litchfield, assuming that she was with him, had eluded observation all along the lonely river, he did not attempt to fathom or explain. He felt, with Field, that their search, individual and combined, had left nothing undone within reasonable conception. The situation was baffling, he admitted, but they must not permit themselves to be baffled. The fact, unmentioned, that Field had made a most thorough search of the upper river without finding the slightest hint of the girl's movements or whereabouts, only to learn weeks later and in a round-about way that she had been at Circle within a few days of his visit, was uppermost in the minds of both. With the most vigilant effort there was the possibility of having overlooked something or somebody somewhere.

Field at heart was somewhat chagrined that he must take an unpromising path, but too manly to complain and too sensible not to sense the unwisdom of further traveling together or protracting their stay at Tanana.

Roberts boarded a gas boat in the evening and set out on his down-river quest, indifferent to any hardships in store for him. He took leave of Field reluctantly. They had become very fond of one another.

As the boat pulled into the muddy stream, Field called cheerily.

"Good luck, old man! Sorry I'm not going along."

"Same to you. I'll miss you," Roberts answered.

Neither dreamed at the moment that their parting was final or that their paths would not again cross in Alaska.

It was Roberts' purpose, after the freeze-up, when his search was completed, whether successful or unsuccessful, to hire a dog team and come out over the Rainy Pass trail. It was his high, fervent hope to bring Lyle Blake with him. He had no thought of being detained throughout the Winter.

Field left Tanana the following day on the General Jacobs, army boat, for Nenana, where big work was under way at the base of construction of the Northern and Central sections of the government railroad. Why he was going there he could not definitely answer. He felt that the Governor would likely be moved to the same inquiry. Actually it seemed a fool's errand. But, if not Nenana, where should he go? Nenana was in direct and constant communication with the world. Should the girl arrive there, or at Fairbanks, the fact would be known at once. Indeed, she herself would make her presence known. Nevertheless, Field reasoned, he could move in any direction easier and deal with any emergency that might arise more expeditiously from Nenana than from Tanana. When the rivers closed he could quickly join Roberts, if need be, by going over the snow from Kobe, below Nenana. Moreover, he would be in nearer reach by trail of points on the upper river.

Arriving at Nenana, the contrast with conditions at Tanana was striking. Hustle and bustle prevailed. The former Indian mission hamlet, slumbering on the lonely shore, now presented itself as a miniature metropolis. It had hotels and stores, a modern restaurant locally famous for its cuisine, a daily paper,

a power-plant, shops, railroad offices, well-stocked warehouses—all, at the moment, operating under high tension and at capacity. Construction trains were coming in and going out. The wage scale was good and work urgent. Every minute was being utilized to speed the railroad building to the southward and complete the abutments for the mammoth steel bridge to span the Tanana River here. The sixty-mile narrow-gauge track northward to Fairbanks was already in use and handling much freight. Progress was being made at the rate of a mile a day in closing the gap between steel in the Broad Pass country. Not until it was closed and the bridge built could through trains be run. "Hurry-up" Jones, in charge of the construction gangs, was winning his sobriquet these strenuous days.

It was a period of action, with a colossal work under pressure, and Field came upon the busiest of scenes. Prospectors he had known were now in Uncle Sam's employ. Working for the railroad was more remunerative than trapping or digging for gold. Homesteaders, similarly, had abandoned the land for places on the big payroll. It was not easy money thus acquired, but it came regularly and was coveted by willing hands.

Miners from the Chandalar, the Kobuk and the Koyukuk, in the Arctic Circle, who, hitherto, when able to go out for the Winter, went tediously via Fairbanks and the Richardson trail, were now coming to Nenana and going by the faster, if broken, journey by rail. New faces appeared daily in the streets and Field was adroitly alert for tidings of Wes Litchfield, but obtained not a hint.

Having wired his address to Juneau immediately upon his arrival, a letter came from the Governor

ten days afterward. It was brief, expressing regret over the futility of the search and unshaken faith in Field, but adding, as Field had anticipated, "Why Nenana?" Naturally the Governor was mystified, and it was a thing Field himself could not satisfactorily explain. It nettled him for the moment, but in his detailed report, which went forward by next mail, he presented the situation as it existed and invited a suggestion from the Governor as to a better plan to pursue. None was forthcoming. Receipt of the report was acknowledged by telegraph with instruction to "wait orders."

Restless beyond endurance, in spite of the activity about him, Field made a two days' trip to Fairbanks with "Hurry-up" Jones and fraternized with old friends and new. The failure of the teacher to come, he learned, was a closed incident. Such things had occurred before and the school was running smoothly with the substitute. As Lyle Blake was unknown in Fairbanks, her non-appearance had not become subject of gossip or prolonged comment.

But Field's visit was not wholly unfruitful. He called for the girl's mail. The Postmaster knew him and handed it out promptly.

"You are just in the niche of time," remarked the official. "These letters would have been dead and gone to Washington next week. Several have already been returned to the addresses given."

"I understand," said Field. "They will now reach her."

Eleven in all comprised the budget, most of them from Lyle's mother and postmarked in Indiana or at Juneau. One was from the Governor's daughter. Two bore Canadian stamps and came from Mayo and Dawson. Field instantly recognized Wayne

Roberts' handwriting, with which he had become familiar on their travels. Returning to Nenana, he enclosed them in a large official envelope and dispatched them to Juneau. Motherlike, Mrs. Blake had not asked that the letters be forwarded, hoping against hope that her daughter would yet call for them.

Ice began to appear in the Tanana River the third week in October and Field watched it from day to day with growing restlessness. The General Jacobs was already tied up for the Winter and the General Davis was making its last trip up-stream and would then be docked. Navigation was all but closed for the season. He was discouraged. Roberts' absence oppressed him. Days had elapsed without a word from him. Field wished he were with him, wherever he was. The frozen country on the Yukon beckoned to him. Behind a dog team or before a log fire in a road-house or ensconced in a friendly igloo he might cease to worry. This marking time was monotonously distressing. Depressed, he momentarily considered appealing to Juneau to be relieved of his job. He was not and never pretended to be a sleuth. The role was becoming hateful to him. It was an invisible occupation. Always in the past he had been doing something openly, frankly and above board. What must his old friends be thinking of him! Truth to tell, they were thinking nothing adversely, but his bad fancies ran riot. He even conjectured that he might be classified as a bootlegger. A man without known means of support was usually so suspected.

He was in this gloomy mood when two messages reached him simultaneously. One, from the Governor, directed him to come to Juneau for a conference. The other, from Roberts, at Akiak, by wire-

less, delayed in transmission, contained these ten terse words:

> "Next Kaltag. Sure there or thereabout. Starting tonight. Wait advice."

Kaltag! A native hamlet, on the Yukon, some distance below Nulato. Field knew Kaltag. Evidently Roberts had gained a clue or he would not be returning post haste. But there was no boat. The sturdiest power craft could not now move against the current and rapidly forming ice. Within a week, possibly overnight, the river would be frozen solidly. Moreover, Akiak, whence the message came, was on the Kuskokwim and a week would be required to cover the trail and portage to Holy Cross. Then, unless a dog team was in readiness and no delays ensued en route, Roberts could not at best reach Kaltag in less than ten days more. He would not be there before the 10th of November at the earliest.

The messages had brought Field out of his depression instantly and restored his old self. Again he was a man of action, with no time for moods. Calculating Roberts' itinerary and foreseeing contingencies, he felt sure that he himself could reach Kaltag in half the time. But Roberts, who must know this, had asked him to wait advices.

The Governor's message had gone unheeded. Relatively it was unimportant. It was his rule to obey orders unquestioningly, but in this case his chief would expect him to act upon his best judgment. The conference was of secondary importance. But, as his thoughts ran fast, it occurred to him that the Governor, too, might have received information which could not be disclosed by wire. Thereupon his indecision passed. He would go to Juneau.

Field made quick exit from Nenana. A work train, leaving two hours later, carried him to the end

of steel of the northern trackage. He mushed over the gap the next day. It was rough going. A driving snow turned to sleet and was followed by a cold wave. By evening mercury dropped below zero, and Le Gault's road-house, at mile 305, over the summit, proved a comfortable rendezvous. A hand car had expedited his journey. By slow stages, traveling with a construction crew, he proceeded next day to Anchorage, where he was fortunate enough to secure immediate passage on the steamship Alameda, which had come up Cook Inlet to deliver railroad supplies.

Outward-bound, while in port at Seward, Field learned through the Gateway that river navigation had completely closed during the week. The blizzard he encountered crossing the gap had precipitated the freeze-up. From Dawson all the way down the Yukon ice had now solidly formed. October 28th, on the upper river, and November 6th below, had witnessed the eventuation.

Roberts, at the time, was hiking across country from Akiak to Holy Cross with a native guide. Trail and portage were well-nigh impassable. Exceptionally mild Autumn weather and wet snow had made the tundra soft and uncertain. Roberts, less light of foot than the guide, repeatedly stumbled and sank in the mire, and once extracted himself with great difficulty. On the last lap to Russian Mission a sleet storm aggravated conditions and they were compelled when night came to take shelter in an abandoned cache where, with scarcely room to stretch their legs, they slept intermittently while the elements howled. Toward morning the temperature dropped and the wind abated and they were chilled to the marrow. A fire was impossible, with no wood within reach for miles, and they breakfasted on hard

tack. The plucky Roberts was cheered by the native's unconcerned demeanor.

"Awrigh, awrigh," he kept repeating, with a reassuring grin. He knew that with a freeze their further journey would be easier, and in broken English he conveyed the information with his "awrigh —awrigh," which Roberts readily interpreted as all right.

And it proved to be so. They were on their way long before the sun rose—late of necessity in that latitude. The day was cold and clear and they hiked along rapidly over ice and snow. Roberts could see that the Eskimo, continually in the lead, acting as pace-maker and path-finder, was enjoying himself. It was his kind of weather. In endurance, however, Roberts was quite his equal and could have kept step with him, if necessary.

"No co—awrigh, awrigh," the native would say, meaning to inquire whether his companion was cold, and Roberts would answer that he was all right. His parka was protecting him and he liked the experience. But he was weary and worn when they reached Russian Mission and did not tarry long by the fire in the road-house, but sought a bunk for a good night's rest.

At breakfast a friendly fur-trader enlivened the conversation. He was plainly curious about Roberts, who was politely uncommunicative, save to say that he was going to Holy Cross, where he would hire a dog team and go up the Yukon and Tanana to Nenana, and thence by rail and ocean to the outside world.

"Wish you were going to stay," said the trader. "I should challenge you to a tournament of pinochle. Know the game?"

"I've played bezique," Roberts answered, "but am no master hand. Much alike, are they not?"

"Yes, but pinochle is the play that holds you. Last Winter Wes Litchfield was here and we played forty games to a draw."

"Wes Litchfield?"

"Don't know the old man? Everybody on the river knows him. He is by odds the best pinochle player, yours truly excepted, between Whitehorse and St. Michael."

"Live here?"

"Nowhere as a steady place of abode when not aboard his boat, but home wherever he hangs his hat."

"And where does it hang now?"

"Up Nulato way, I hear. He sent word to 'Sandy' Colburn to look after his dog over at Apokak below Akiak."

It was this knowledge, previously gained by Roberts, by chance, directly from "Sandy" Colburn, that was directing Roberts' quest back up the river and had prompted his message to Field. He had met "Sandy," leading a handsome dog, a Siberian wolfhound, on the bank of the Kuskokwim, near Apokak, and stopped to admire the animal and discuss the breed. Roberts was ready to buy him and take him to the States as the best specimen of the canine family he had found in Alaska. But "Sandy"—a squaw man, Roberts subsequently learned—promptly negatived negotiations toward that end. The dog, called "Lockie," did not belong to him and was not for sale. He was keeping him for the Winter, and was under promise to give him good care. His owner, "Sandy" volunteered, was Wes Litchfield, and he had named the animal after a Sourdough crony. Roberts immediately inquired where he could find

Litchfield. "Sandy" did not know precisely. He had docked his boat up the river somewhere and sent "Sandy" a message from Kaltag to take good care of the dog until he returned. Roberts pressed him for additional information, but "Sandy" became wary and would tell nothing further that he might know. Loving the dog, and evidently thinking Roberts determined to buy him, "Sandy" was suspicious and on guard, and declared threateningly that "Lockie" might be killed, but would never be sold. This ended the parley and comprehended the fullness of the clue. By judicious inquiry at the hamlet Roberts learned that "Sandy" Colburn was a reliable man of his type, devoted to his Eskimo wife, and that he had been in the employ of Wes Litchfield from time to time as a boatman, trapper and fisherman.

Coupled with the fact that Lyle Blake's wireless telegram to her mother had been filed at Nulato, the word sent to "Sandy" Colburn from Kaltag was convincing proof to Roberts that Litchfield was at or near Kaltag and he resolved at once to set out for the locality.

The confirmation casually given by the fur trader was unimportant, but illustrated how intimately Alaskans acquire information concerning one another. Roberts marvelled that he and Field had been so unsuccessful in their quest closer at hand. He had not stopped at Kaltag coming down, but had diligently renewed his inquiry at Nulato without obtaining the faintest clue.

Pinochle had no interest for Roberts and he abruptly took his leave of the trader while he was still eloquently discoursing on the virtues and charms of the game.

Field's estimate that a week would be required for

Roberts to reach Holy Cross from Akiak proved fairly accurate. Actually the time consumed was less by a full day. From Russian Mission steady progress was made, the hard-frozen snow expediting the journey. The cheery guide was tireless. His animation never waned. He had agreed to conduct Roberts only as far as Holy Cross. Nothing could induce him to go beyond. His plans for the Winter were made. He was going to St. Michael and would join a party of fellow natives at Andreafski. He aided Roberts in engaging a dog team, and, with renewed "awrigh, awrigh," departed. But time gained thus far was soon lost. The owner of the dog team could not start that day, or the next, or next. Pretext after pretext offered excuse for delay. Impetuous and eager, Roberts whiled away the passing hours and days impatiently. Except for the interest the Holy Cross mission afforded him—the splendid self-sacrificing service to humanity in this out-of-the-way place in the training of dependent native children—the waiting would have been unbearable. He counted worth while his talks with the teachers and nurses and the tots entrusted to their care, and charged himself with the duty of bringing the mission's work to the attention of certain philanthropists in the East.

Not until the morning of the fifth day after his arrival did he get away with the dogs and sled, fully provisioned for the journey. It was his first experience of such travel, and he relished it. A group of children on the steps of the mission waved to him as he sped away. The ice was firm, but, untraveled as yet, was rough for long stretches. He elected to ride on the runner when not walking rather than ensconce himself in the sled in pity for the eight dogs struggling valiantly with the load over the bumps. The leader of the team, called "Rifle," seemed un-

cannily intelligent. To the "gee Rifle" and "haw Rifle" of his master he was ever instantly responsive, and Roberts was struck with the dog's alertness and sureness in guiding the sled. He was a veritable captain, as well as leader, and constantly giving command in barks to his team. Roberts had read of such dogs and Field had told him more, but "Rifle" was a real revelation to him of animal intelligence. The owner of the team was not gentle, but often profane, and roused Roberts' resentment. Once when "Rifle" swerved and fell and was sworn at Roberts ran forward and helped him and ordered the man to keep back. Thereafter his temper was held in restraint.

Time was lost at Anvik. The man, insisting that the team must have a long rest, but more interested in seeing some of his river cronies, refused to start on until a day and two nights had been wasted. Then he protracted the starting until the forenoon was half gone. After three hours' travel, covering twelve miles, one of the dogs, clearly too young and untrained for such a journey, dropped and could not rise. "Rifle," sensing the trouble, halted and looked at his suffering mate pityingly. The better side of the master then manifested itself. From the sled he brought forth remedies and applied them. He blanketed the sufferer and proceeded to feed the team. This done, and darkness having come, he announced that they would remain there overnight. Roberts uncomplainingly acquiesced. Each succeeding day was marked and married by a similar untoward episode making for further exasperation on Roberts' part. He wished he were mushing over the trail with Field. One trip with dogs was a surfeit. He seriously contemplated hiking on alone, but sober second-thought told him this would be foolhardy in the extreme, as hamlets were far apart in this section.

Instead of the trip from Holy Cross to Kaltag requiring ten days, as Field had estimated, the distance was only half covered in that time. Save for the sturdy leadership of "Rifle," even this progress not have been accomplished.

Meanwhile, a tangled skein of life was strangely unraveling itself without the aid of Roberts. Cut off from communication, a wireless message at Nulato grew stale awaiting his coming.

"Not until the morning of the fifth day, did he get away with the dogs and sled provisioned for the journey." [p. 241]

PART IV

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE MOTHER OPENS HER HEART

MRS. BLAKE, with fine fortitude, while anxiously waiting word of her daughter, modestly entered into the life of Juneau and engaged in church work, but grew increasingly fond of her picturesque, miniature home on the mountainside, where she found the greatest peace and contentment. The weather these shortening September days was ideal, and the view of the little capital spread out below along the broad channel, with the changing shadows and twinkling lights, continually charmed her.

She followed the steamship schedules closely and knew, day by day, the time fixed for arrivals. Occasionally the calendar printed in the evening paper, when exact information about a vessel was unobtainable by wireless or cable, would indefinitely say "beginning at 8 o'clock," or other given hour, which meant that it might be expected then or thereafter. Sitting at her window, she would strain her eyes for a glimpse of it. When fog or mist prevailed she would make inquiry of the telephone exchange, whose operators used a field glass and were obliging and usually first to see. She herself, under clear conditions, could readily identify any one of the larger steamers as it turned into the channel and recognize its distinctive whistle. Regularly, unless the arrival was late at night, she was in the throng assembled on the wharf, scanning the faces of those coming down the gangway and watching the huge sacks of mail thrown off. Then she would go to the postoffice and stand expectantly at her box until the mail was as-

sorted and distributed. Again and again she had thus lingered and looked and, unrewarded, gone sadly back up the mountain with dragging footsteps and sinking heart.

Early in October, on Sunday morning, the Rogers put into port and brought to the brave, patient woman an accumulation of mail. Letter after letter came through the box into her hands, and she was made joyous beyond expression. Four of them were from Lyle! The familiar writing thrilled her. Eager and excited, she hastened to the Governor's house, unable to wait until she reached home, and took possession of his study to read them. The family had gone to church.

Nervously she noted the postmarks. They came from Circle, Ft. Yukon, Rampart and Tanana. At each stopping place the dutiful daughter had mailed a letter. But how old they were! The latest, the bulky one from Tanana, bore date of over a month ago. They had travelled varied and circuitous routes, up the river and out, by slow and easy stages, and gone from Alaska to Indiana, well across the continent, and back to Juneau. All of them antedated the wireless message from Nulato. But they were from Lyle, and, hungrily, she devoured every word and line, opening them in the order of their mailing.

Those from Circle, Ft. Yukon and Rampart were cheerful, short letters, telling in enthusiastic, loving terms of the wonderful time she was having and the gorgeousness of the midnight sun, and mentioning that, besides keeping a diary, she was writing all about this most interesting experience of her life and would mail it later, probably from Fairbanks. It could not be told piecemeal.

The long, long, comprehensive letter from Tanana

contained it. Unconscious of the lapse of time, the mother was still reading and re-reading it, and crying over it, when the family returned.

"The dear child," she said, "has written faithfully all the while, as I knew she had, and I should be perfectly happy with her precious letters if I only knew what happened after she left Tanana and why she did not reach Fairbanks and where she is now."

"She was with the old Sourdough?" meaning Litchfield, inquired the Governor.

"Of course," she answered, as if never in doubt on that point, "and he was taking the best of care of her. You should see how fondly and trustingly she writes of him. I know and feel she could not have been in safer hands. She tells so many pleasing incidents of his zealous attention and little acts of kindness. Why, this letter"—the long one—"is as interesting and thrilling as a story."

But she did not offer to read it or let them read it. Its intimate passages were not for other ears or eyes.

"Your mail has taken on proportions," remarked the Governor, glancing at letters yet unopened.

She had forgotten these in poring over those her heart craved. Now she gave them inanimated attention until she came to one that held her interest.

"It is from Mr. Roberts," she said. "How strange! It was written at Tanana. Why did he not find her? He bids me be of good cheer, and I shall, and says she is surely all right, as I think, and will soon be with me, but she isn't."

She began to sob, but, recovering, went to a map on the wall and traced Tanana anew, and Nulato, and asked the distance between the two points and how long it would require to cover it by boat. The Governor estimated that it was 300 miles and might

easily be made in two days or less going down the river.

"But the message was filed at Nulato ten days later," said the mother, quick to analyze facts and make deductions. "How can we account for that? And Mr. Field was there very soon after!"

The Governor did not attempt to account for it. He said it was manifest to him and had been all the time that they had gone down the river, filing the message in passing, and were now somewhere on the lower Yukon. Why, he could not explain, nor how it was possible for them to travel in open water unobserved. It was all incomprehensible, he admitted, but they would ultimately be located.

"'Ultimately'—'ultimately'—I cannot bear the waiting. The suspense is too hard." She leaned against the desk, unutterably miserable. "But," brightening immediately, as was her wont, "I must do as she directs—not worry. She will come to me."

Opening another letter, she gasped and stared in surprise, but without disclosing its nature.

It was a statement from a bank in Indiana, showing the balance to her credit was now very low. She had lived economically and conserved every dollar, but the expense of her trip to Juneau was heavy and a small quarterly income which she previously received had ceased. Always each month Lyle remitted half of her teaching salary, and now, this ended, what would she do when that small balance was exhausted? Back home temporary aid would be given for the asking, and willingly. But away off in Alaska it was so different. The thought of being reduced to the necessity of appeal to new-made friends appalled her. She must find something to do, she thought, and without delay. Maybe she could get a place at the emporium or in the nugget shop.

Or she might teach. But the school term had begun and this was impossible.

In a daze, sorely perplexed, she put on her wraps and gathered up the letters. The family begged her to stay for luncheon, wife and daughter insisting earnestly, but she declined.

"Not today. I must go home and think. I've so much to do, and think about," she said, and abruptly departed.

They did not see her again for a week. In answer to solicitous telephone calls she assured them that she was well, and busy, sewing and writing, and had been too occupied to get downtown.

When Sunday came she taught an early class, as usual, and remained for the regular church service following. At its close she sought the Governor's wife in the corridor and, in undertone, said:

"I must relieve my troubled heart and am wondering whether I might pour it out to you, good friend. May I come to see you this afternoon, or could you come to me?"

"Either, and gladly," answered the wife, all sympathy and ever responsive. "Come home with me."

"If we could talk undisturbed, it would be so helpful and do me a world of good."

"Then," anticipating callers at the Mansion, "I'll come to you."

The afternoon was dismal and the climb wearisome, but weather and hill were forgotten in the warmth of the welcome extended at the cottage and the relief the visit afforded.

Hesitantly at first, with the long letter from Lyle as a basis, the distressed mother bared her heart and soul. Her daughter had been her one and only confidant all her dear life. The years had brought them closer and closer together. They lived in and for

one another, and knew their innermost thoughts. When separated—and this was necessary, however painful, in order that the child might become self-reliant and see and know the world—they kept in close, constant touch by pen. Never did a day pass without the exchange of a word of love. From the time she could toddle and talk Lyle had come to her in sweet frankness about everything. She had no secrets, but told her of her little love affairs, and when she went away to school and later qualified as a teacher this confiding habit was unbroken. In trying hours mother had leaned upon child and found her such a comfort.

Thus she talked at length, holding the bulky letter in her hand. She illustrated Lyle's character with incident and happening, citing the fact that she had written frankly in detail of her chance acquaintance with Wayne Roberts and said that he interested her and had inspired her "admiration, or more."

"But I am resolved that you may read this letter," ending the eulogy of the daughter. "Then you will better understand. It contains nothing to be concealed, but I hold her letters sacred and have feared that she would lose her naturalness, if conscious that anyone else read them. It means everything to keep her as she is. But, unable now to talk with her, I must confide in somebody and I give you my implicit trust. You have a daughter, as dear to you as Lyle to me, and have had heartaches and anxieties, no doubt, akin to mine, if not so heavy to bear. A mother cannot escape these."

She gave her the long letter and, as it was silently and slowly read, she watched the reading, intently studying the effect and expectantly awaiting comment.

"I have never read anything sweeter or more entertaining," said the Governor's wife, finishing it. "Why, she is so graphic that I can visualize every phase of her wonderful journey. What an experience! And how simply, yet eloquently, she describes it. But the charm of her letter is in the setting down of her meditations and her depiction of the lonely, longing old man. His worship of her is evident and most remarkable and pathetic."

"Yes, yes, I knew you would see it; but you cannot grasp its full meaning as do I. You noted her remark that she felt more 'closely drawn to him' than anyone save her mother?"

It had not gone unnoticed.

"It hurt me," continued Mrs. Blake, "that she should even momentarily entertain such a feeling. It meant or seemed to mean to me that she was giving to the kind old man part of a filial love which should be all mine. I could hardly read the dear letter. Unwittingly, the child inflicted upon me the keenest pain I ever felt. I did not blame her. She was her precious, honest self in disclosing it to me. But, oh, that such feeling existed! It cut me to the quick. Yet there was a tender devotion to me in every line of her letter, as you have seen. I asked God why it had to be and prayed to Him for support and strength. Possibly you have borne the pain of a mother's jealousy. Of course you have, with children married and gone from you, but she is my one and all and I suffered with an intensity you could hardly feel."

"I understand—I do understand," she was assured, in profound commiseration.

"No, you cannot fully until I have told you more."

And she proceeded to divulge a sad chapter of her life which had given her permanent sorrow.

When young—much younger than Lyle today—she was happily married, but her happiness was short-lived, terminating tragically in Lyle's babyhood. Her husband, Harold Blake, fifteen years older than she, belonged to a prominent family and was attractive and popular. He had gone to college, without graduating, and entered business with his father. Her parents liked him, but disapproved the marriage because of the disparity in their years and the fact that he had never quite settled down. While not dissipated or wild, he kept company with men whose ways were not above reproach and was identified with an easy-going coterie of the town and his mode of living not in keeping with the position he held. He spent money freely and in their courtship made her many presents. A mere girl, with scant appreciation of the cost of things, she did not realize his extravagance, but others noted it and looked askance. An old aunt, wise in her generation, whom she loved, had opened her eyes to the risk of the marriage and urged her to postpone it a year. She then had a serious talk with her suitor and persuaded him to wait, and was preparing to enter college when Blake's father died suddenly, leaving his affairs in bankrupt condition. In deep distress the son came to her and begged for immediate marriage. His mother had previously passed away and he was now "all alone," and he needed her to make a new start. Hitherto she had not been altogether sure that she loved him as she should, but now, her sympathy aroused, her heart responded and she yielded to his entreaties. The next day they were quietly married.

Their union was blissful throughout the first year. He worked hard and paid some of his father's debts. It was a dream year of still sweet, vivid memory. He continued to lavish gifts upon her. Occasionally she

mildly remonstrated and told him he could not afford such expenditures and called his attention to their savings bank account, which was growing slowly, but his pleasure in buying jewelry and bon bons and the like was so genuine, and it was such a pleasing manifestation of affection, that she was careful not to hurt him by objecting too strongly. It was his nature to be generous and, actually, being young, she herself would have felt hurt and feared she was losing his love, if he ceased making presents. She was proud of him and innocently thought him a successful business man, and even looked forward to moving to the city, where his ability would have larger scope. Abhorring debts, she was especially gratified that they lived on a cash basis and owed nothing. His father had made such a sorry mess of his affairs, and her own, she knew, had lacked frugality and aged prematurely, worrying over renewals at the bank. She was determined to be free from debt, and they adhered to this as an inviolable rule.

In their second year he was uniformly tender, but his devotion to home waned. His lodge and club took more and more of his time and he returned later and later. Gradually he turned night into day. It troubled her. He could not keep such hours and give proper attention to business. But her household expenses were met promptly and he gave her an allowance which she added to their savings, and continued to bring her presents. Once, after a week at the capital, when the legislature was in session, he surprised her with a diamond brooch. She prized it, but it was too elaborate and embarrassed her when she wore it. His generosity and unfailing kindness did not atone for his frequent absence. Her heart ached and his gifts became empty and meaningless. An evening with him as of old was more precious

than anything he could buy. But she forced herself to be bright and appear happy. She admonished him that he should sleep at night and get the sunshine, and he laughed, insisting that he was "in the pink of condition." There was constant comfort for her in the knowledge that he did not drink, nor smoke to excess, and that his constancy as a husband was beyond question. Other wives, she knew, had greater cause for heart-aches than she.

A disillusionment that well-nigh killed her came in the Autumn of that year. Always an orgie of gambling was officially sanctioned in connection with the county fair, and games of chance ran openly. She discovered with dismay that he was operating a wheel of fortune. It shocked and humiliated her. That her Harold Blake was lowering himself to such a pursuit was at first unbelievable. Yet it was the shameful, brazen truth. The wife of a gambler! She never wanted to see him again. How could he bring this shame upon her! She thanked the Lord there were no children to bear the awful stigma. But—in her misery she went to her mother only to learn a more bitter truth. Gambling had been his sole occupation for months. Only she, blind and trusting, and loving him so, was in ignorance of the abhorrent fact. The whole community knew it and her family supposed she knew and had silently grieved and pitied her all the time.

Convulsed in recalling this portion of the tragic chapter, she hurried over the rest.

He truly loved her, she said, and became truly penitent and remorseful, and scarcely left her bedside during her serious illness following. She forgave him and believed in him anew. Even now she was convinced that he endeavored manfully to lead a different life and redeem himself. Their baby—

Lyle—came and his pride and joy were unbounded. He would fondle and caress her and play with her by the hour. All his spare time was spent at home. He bought cheap toys for her. His earnings were meager and they lived within them. At that time, the beginning of the third year, she was forgetting the ordeal through which she had passed and was almost as happy as in their honeymoon. In one respect she was happier. She knew that the money they spent was untainted and came from honest toil. She had locked up the costly gifts and put them out of sight.

But his redemption was incomplete. His weakness for cards, inherent and inherited, overcame him. His father played in a limited way and his grandfather for high stakes—both to their loss and undoing. Lapsing back into his old ways, he began to lavish expensive presents upon her and the baby. Then she remonstrated firmly and implored him for the baby's sake, if not hers, to conquer his weakness. He reformed and fell at intervals and, finally, she had gone to her parents when a crime produced a scandal and outcry that forced him to quit the town. A popular official was found short in his accounts and committed suicide. He had lost the embezzled money gambling. Blake had acquired the reputation of a card sharp and was charged with responsibility for the suicide. He disclaimed it stoutly and under stress offered to turn over to the widow every dollar he possessed—a few hundred in all—in sympathy and charity, but without admission of any guilt whatsoever. She spurned the offer and the town scoffed at it and railed at him, interpreting it as a confession. The feeling was so strong that he was denied a fair hearing. Realizing his disgrace, and believing that his wife and child would be better off

without him, and conscious, at last, of his grievious mistakes, he passed out of their lives. He provided for their immediate needs and sent a message of love, asking forgiveness and saying they would not see him until he could come with clean conscience and look them in the face. She had not since seen or heard from him. It was said he went to South America. Periodically she had received remittances, varying in amount, never large, which came indirectly from him, but she had made no effort to trace his whereabouts. She hoped this money was honestly earned. Often it was a God-send.

"I always loved him and love him now," she said, "and have never allowed myself to think of him other than as the victim of a besetting vice and sin—a weakness he could not control. He was a good man otherwise, gifted with rare qualities and the kindliest and best disposition I have ever known. And, oh, what a heavy penalty for his consuming passion!

"Lyle was an infant when he left, but a subconscious impression or picture of him was formed in her baby mind and she has ever mourned him. My one deception was in permitting her to think him dead. It was better so when she was a child, and in later years I have been unable to muster the courage to tell her. Besides, it seemed cruel to dispel her sweet illusions. She has pitifully longed for a father. The craving of her heart has revealed itself time and again in touching ways. It is natural, therefore, that she should be drawn to this lonely old man who has been so good to her and of whom she writes so trustingly, and, after I had prayed over it, I became sensible. Her own father, no doubt, is suffering for affection as this old man suffers, and I cannot bring myself to begrudge him the joy her companionship

gives him. I am harrassed and uneasy and cannot comprehend, but I feel that she is safe and that all will be well in God's own time.

"It is an old, old story I have told you—as old as the world—but now you know and understand. It relieves and comforts me to make you my confidant, and I can advise and counsel with you more freely since you know all."

The Governor's wife, much affected, expressed deep appreciation of the confidence reposed in her and renewed readiness to do anything and everything possible to reunite mother and daughter. For an hour they talked and communed in sisterly manner and separated in affection and mutual faith and understanding.

Thereafter, during the remainder of the month, she visited the Mansion frequently, more cheerful and at ease than before. She was concerned about the freeze-up and the Winter temperature in the interior and consulted the weather bureau records for data. Lyle was not unused to a cold climate, but would be unprepared without her trunk, and this gave the mother keen apprehension in spite of repeated assurances that warm fur clothing—probably a parka—undoubtedly would be furnished her, wherever she might be.

Anticipating the close of navigation, the Governor, some days ago, had advised that the trunk be brought from Dawson on the last up-river boat. She agreed and he secured its release. It was duly received and delivered at the cottage.

Toward the end of October, when Field was fretting at Tanana, the Governor was growing impatient at Juneau. For three months the search had been under way, with nothing accomplished. He did not question Field's vigilance or the thoroughness of his

quest, but was coming to the belief that the mystery would have to work out itself. It pleased him when informed that the two young men had parted at Tanana and Roberts gone to the lower river.

As Field's services were needed officially, he decided to recall him from his special assignment, temporarily, at least. Upon his arrival, they conferred for hours. Roberts' message that a clue had come from Kaltag and he was starting for that point was the all-absorbing development, and discussed from every angle. Within a week Roberts would reach his destination, they hoped, but Field, overlooking no contingencies, thought longer time would be required and did not expect additional word for two weeks.

Mrs. Blake was elatedly confident that Roberts' mission would be successful. She had pinned her faith to his promise and felt that he would not fail. She studied the map, with her eyes focusing upon the hamlet of Kaltag, and by inquiry from Field, who was leaving for Sitka, gained full information about the country and its few inhabitants, some of of whom he knew. It was an absolutely safe community, he told her.

But no word came from Roberts in a week or two weeks.

In the middle of November the Gulf of Alaska was swept by violent storms and vessels were compelled to put into shelter until the elements abated. All westward schedules went awry. A break in the cable, below Dixon's Entrance, and interruption of the wireless, cut off communication with the steamships and alarm ensued on the part of those having friends aboard. Especial anxiety was felt concerning the Victoria, which was making a substitute trip for the Alameda, and an unfounded rumor became

current that she had sent out a distress call. She had survived rougher weather in the Arctics, however, and was not in serious trouble. Four days overdue, she finally reached Juneau, unheralded and ungreeted, at three o'clock in the morning, and, swiftly taking on a small cargo from the mine, proceeded.

The next day the long suspense over Lyle Blake's disappearance was broken by the receipt of a delayed message sent to her mother in Indiana, and transmitted taridly to Juneau. It was a week old, filed at Seward, and read:

> "Leaving Victoria. Coming direct home. Can hardly wait. Much love. "LYLE."

Overwhelmed with grief and happiness, the mother cried and laughed intermittently, in semi-hysteria. What should she do?

The Governor quieted her and solved her difficuty. Fortunately the Victoria had not reached Seattle and he would intercept the girl by wireless and have her wait for her mother there. The Watson, lately storm-bound at Yakutat, would be along tomorrow and she would go on that steamer. He sent the wire and notified Wayne Roberts at Nulato.

The culmination was so sudden and complicated as to daze those directly involved. Tearful leave-takings began at the cottage and continued at the Mansion and were renewed and repeated on dock and steamer. Her state-room was laden with flowers and sweets. The Governor's wife and daughter hugged and kissed her over and over and waved to her until the steamer was far down the channel.

The next issue of the Empire, in its personal column, announced that "Mrs. Harold Blake, who has made many friends in Juneau, left on the Watson, en route to her home in Indiana."

CHAPTER XIX.

DELAYED ELUCIDATION

"A REMARKABLE young man." So soliloquized the Governor about Wayne Roberts, who, three weeks after Mrs. Blake's departure, reached Juneau on the Northwestern and visited the Mansion while the steamer was in port.

For over three months on the trail and in the wilds, in quest of Lyle Blake, he had undergone experiences, not unmixed with actual hardships, which he would recollect forever. The dog team conveying, or, rather, accompanying him, to Kaltag had broken down, day after day, unequal to the journey, and, finally, his patience gone, he had hiked on and covered the last forty miles alone. Kaltag did not know Wes Litchfield. Only one man, a native—all were natives—had ever heard of him, and within an hour Roberts appreciated that this frozen-in hamlet, drowsing the dark Winter away, was barren of information and the last place in the world to look for the missing girl and man.

Thereupon, he mushed along up the river, on the ice, to Nulato, where the wireless message from Juneau, telling of her reappearance, had awaited him for four days. Forthwith, he succeeded in hiring a seasoned dog team, with a reliable master, and, fortunately without loss of time, proceeded to Tanana and thence to Nenana and out by rail.

On the way he heard that a young woman had gone over the ice ten days before with a dog team and he took it for granted she was Lyle Blake and that Wes Litchfield was with her.

Recounting his journey, at the Mansion, he was decidedly matter-of-fact, entering into no unimportant detail and minimizing the hardships. It was "all in a day's work," in his reasoning, and he evidently found no present pleasure in dwelling upon it in review. His mind was on other and immediate things. He was bronzed and not as robust as upon first acquaintance, but showed no ill-effects of hard encounter with the elements and looked in perfect health. Again he was the young man of the world, well-groomed, easy of manner, somewhat reserved.

He was disappointed to miss Mark Field, who was still away, and took from his pocket a small chronometer and handed it to the Governor, with the request that he give it to Field, saying:

"He admired it and I should like him to keep it as a little memento of our days together."

The half-hour whistle cut short his call at the Mansion. As he was leaving, the Governor's wife and daughter, in turn, asked to be remembered to Mrs. Blake and Lyle.

"I shall see them soon," he answered. Previously he had casually made this intention known.

The Governor accompanied him to the steamer and in his state-room they talked for an hour, the whistle having been premature. Again he frankly avowed his love of the girl.

At the very earliest opportunity, he told the Governor, he would see Miss Blake, but, assured that she was safe, business had first call upon him. He must report to his employers and get his work in hand. Then the affair of his heart, to which he had given exclusive heed for three months, would receive renewed attention. Unlike the Governor's family, he was not impatient to learn what had happened to the girl. He could wait.

Mrs. Blake telegraphed upon reaching Seattle that they were leaving for the East and said they had written. Letters came by next steamer, but were unsatisfying. The mother, in a few lines, said that the "dear child" awaited her at the dock and was quite well. She repeated and emphasized anew her appreciation of the kindness extended to her.

Lyle, in an affectionate note to the Governor's daughter, said she was sorely disappointed not to see her good friends when she passed through Juneau; the arrival was untimely and she had been "so terrified by the awful storm on the gulf" that she did not leave her state-room. She spoke of the joy of being with her mother, but did not mention her long absence. The note lacked her cheery spirit.

To the Governor "all's well that ends well" was a good doctrine. Lyle was safe and unharmed and would be duly married, no doubt, and be happy ever afterward. This was enough, he contended, and all that could reasonably be asked or expected. He even twitted his family upon their display of "idle curiosity," when, in truth, he was as curious or eagerly concerned as they. The desire to know why she did not sail on the Selkirk or claim her trunk at Dawson, or report for school duty at Fairbanks, and how she had reached the lonely region of Nulato, and what she had been doing there all the time, was natural and consuming, prompted by affectionate interest.

Months elapsed without elucidation. Letters in endearing terms came from Indiana at intervals, but vouchsafed no explanation. Mrs. Blake, in a postscript to one of these, said significantly to the Governor's wife that she hoped some day to tell her "the rest of the story," but could not do so in a letter.

Lyle wrote affectionately to the Governor's daugh-

ter, but not as animatedly as in their early friendship. She was no longer teaching, but living quietly with her mother and utilizing her time writing. Every day Alaska was in her mind and her trip was "all a strange dream," she said, but made no further reference to her experience. Sometime she might see the interesting country again. She begged the daughter to visit her. "Have the Governor bring you when he goes to Washington," she urged.

In the Spring the Governor went East, but could not stop in Indiana. In New York he received a long-distance telephone call from Wayne Roberts in Connecticut and they had a short talk. The young man said he was returning to Denver shortly and would again be in British Columbia during the Summer.

Roberts and Mark Field were keeping in touch by correspondence, of a business rather than personal nature. They had been brought too close together on their travels to pass out of one another's lives. Roberts put high estimate upon Field's ability and was interested in his advancement. They had talked of untouched mining opportunities in various regions. Field's knowledge of the Territory was peculiarly intimate, comprehensive and valuable, and, in lonely road-houses, they discussed various available projects and formulated some tentative plans requiring large capital. Roberts indicated his readiness to use Field's services in mining development in Canada, in a position at once remunerative and promising, but, while appreciative, Field dissented. He was too loyal an Alaskan to consider going "outside" and believed, in the end, his future would be more secure here. Roberts, ever practical, agreed that he was better equipped for service in Alaska than elsewhere, and nothing definite was determined upon when they

parted at Tanana. But out of sight did not mean out of mind, and Roberts, busily engaged making up for lost time, continued actively interested in Field's welfare.

It was through this relationship, and in a most practical, businesslike way, that the explanation of Lyle Blake's strange disappearance was finally forthcoming.

Field was detailed to go into the interior and the Kuskokwim on an official errand immediately upon the opening of navigation and mentioned the fact in a letter to Roberts. By a return mail came a surprisprising commission which, because of their friendship, was freely accepted as in the nature of a command.

> "The trip you are making"—wrote Roberts—"spares me a long and hurried jaunt to Alaska which I can ill-afford at this particular time, but should otherwise, nevertheless, have made. I wish you to secure a gas boat left by Wes Litchfield in the custody of Takihusha at his trading post, 150 miles up the Koyukuk River from Nulato, and arrange to have it go under its own power, or by towage, to Seattle. It is a sturdy craft and possibly you may care to use it to expedite your trip down the Yukon. At Ruby please stop and examine into the mining claim owned by Litchfield as shown by the copy herewith enclosed. Probably you know something of its value. Then, when you reach the Kuskokwim, oblige me further by looking up "Sandy" Colburn at Akiak or Apokak and get the dog which Litchfield left with him and ship, also, to Seattle. He is a fine animal which I tried to buy when I was there. The accompanying paper is proof of ownership. I am sending you a check to cover necessary expense incurred. If insufficient, send bill or draw upon me. It is much to ask you to look after all these things, but I know your willingness and am ever ready to reciprocate. If your proposed trip should be altered or cancelled, cable me and I will come.

"Wes Litchfield, as you doubtless have surmised, was Miss Blake's father, Harold Blake. I was convinced of it all the time."

Field was amazed. He had not surmised it. The revelation was complete. Roberts, in their travels, never hinted such a theory. Wes Litchfield the father of Lyle Blake! It was incomprehensible. He reread the closing paragraph of the letter. How inexplicably strange! His first meeting with the old sourdough in the Chandalar came back to him. He recalled his fine qualities and was gratified that, in the fruitless search, his good opinion of the man was unaffected by evil report. It was all the clearer now that he was no ordinary frontiersman.

Examining the inclosures, he found that they offered seeming proof. The mining claim was duly assigned to Lyle Blake, attested by Takihusha. A type-written letter signed by her authorized Takihusha to surrender the gas boat to Mark Field. An order bearing Litchfield's own signature, dated in November, six months ago, directed "Sandy" Colburn to deliver the dog to bearer. All the papers were in legal and proper form. But what had become of Litchfield? Roberts spoke of him in the past tense, as if dead. Certainly so well known an Alaskan could not pass unnoticed. The letter said he was her father, and Roberts was invariably precise.

Mystified, Field sought the Governor, to whom the letter was a revelation, but not equally surprising. His wife had confided her theory to him and, gradually, with the lapse of time, he had given it credence. Lack of any other explanation strengthened it. "After all," he remarked, "a woman's intuition is oftener right than wrong"—an acknowledgment born of intuitive wifely insight and guidance throughout his career.

Whether the girl's father was now living or dead perplexed the Governor, as it did Field. When in Juneau Roberts had assumed, quite confidently, that the young woman who went out over the ice by dog team ahead of him was Lyle Blake and that the old man accompanied her. If that were true, possibly he died after reaching Indiana. But the passenger list of the Victoria, it had been learned, did not contain his name.

Recourse was had to the Bureau of Vital Statistics, and Field spent hours searching the records of deaths. Litchfield's name did not appear. But by merest chance he came upon a card that held his attention and rewarded his industry. A return from Nulato, made through the Commissioner, certified that Harold Blake, a native of Indiana, fifty-nine years old, had died on November 21st, last, in the Koyukuk district, of heart trouble, unattended by a physician.

Undoubtedly this was the old sourdough known as Wes Litchfield. The use of his real name in the record readily accounted for his death being unknown, and this explanation was accepted as conclusive.

To the Governor's family the clearing of the mystery was fraught with keenest interest and deepest pity for mother and daughter. Their long silence was now understandable. Naturally, overwhelmed with grief, they could not write of such a tragic happening. What an ordeal for Lyle, to find, away off in Alaska, her father, whom she believed dead, and then lose him! They pictured her distress and suffered with her. What a brave spirit to undergo and live through such experience! She had come so lighthearted, so happy—as care-free as a child—and gone so cheerily on her way. Tearfully they recalled her

bright sayings and doings on the journey to Juneau, incidents of her stay at the Capital, her artlessness and loveableness, and girlish enthusiasm and joy in living. And the courageous, patient little mother! What a crushing, heart-piecing story the dear girl had to tell her when reunited.

The Governor's wife dwelt upon the wonderful letter from the girl which she had been permitted to read, and her depiction of the gentle, courteous old man, to whom she said she felt "more closely drawn" than anyone save her mother, and the instant impression this had created. It was a filial bond, she thought, in reading the letter, and now it was perfectly plain. To her the infinitely pathetic phase of the extraordinary case was that father and mother, truly loving one another all these years, as well as father and daughter, could not have been brought together. But God in merciful kindness had directed the child to the lonely wanderer and given him peace. It was His way. Thus believing, and freed from restraint, the Governor's wife wrote long and tenderly to Mrs. Blake and Lyle, and conveyed the loving sympathy of the household.

Mark Field, timing his departure to be relatively coincident with the break-up of the ice in the Yukon, left for the interior in June. Reaching Ruby, via Tanana, by the first down-river steamer, he stopped to investigate the mining claim, and proceeded by gas boat, with a party of prospectors, on to the Koyukuk and up that river to Takihusha's post.

The trader, quickly grasping his mission, readily assisted in its execution.

"Ver', ver', sad, yes," he said continually, as they looked over the boat and examined a few other of the old man's belongings left in his custody. He had scrupulously inventoried and taken care of every-

thing entrusted to him and was prepared to surrender possession upon call, but methodically exact as to necessary order and receipt.

The boat, the Lyle Blake, was still under cover and bore close inspection. It had been freshly painted about the deck and the interior was as clean and attractive as when its fair occupant left it. Taki's deft handiwork had kept it so, and he grinned proudly when Field voiced his admiration and declared it the prettiest craft of the type he had ever seen. It fitted, he thought, the character of Harold Blake, or Wes Litchfield as he had known him. His guitar hung on the wall and the half-dozen books and a few magazines were neatly arranged on the shelf. Some of his effects, Taki said, had been boxed and gone East in the girl's charge. Every article remaining was recorded in the inventory.

"You like see grave, yes?" asked Taki.

Assenting, he was escorted three hundred yards to the hillside, where, within a white enclosure, which Field had observed upon landing, the old man was buried. Taki and the half-breed had made the grave and constructed and painted the railing, after the manner of the native burial plats at Nulato, omitting the lurid hues and the placing of earthly things upon the mound. A fire-weed was growing at each corner and would soon begin to flame.

"Ves', ver' sad, yes," solmenly said Taki.

Field, silently responsive, was touched by the scene and the simple manifestation of oriental sentiment.

Taki summoned the half-breed and all three worked during the afternoon and evening, launching the boat, preparatory to Field's start in the morning. Taki stocked the commissary and filled the gas tank.

Field decided to sleep aboard, and he and Taki sat in the cabin and talked until a late hour.

Taki told him he had taken the girl by dog team to Nenana and put her aboard the train, and he had received a letter from her in the Spring.

"She ver', ver' good, yes," said the little man, "but ver', ver' sad, yes."

Field questioned him about the trip over the snow and ice and the time it had taken.

"Ver' good trip, yes," answered Taki. "Not long, no; eight days, yes; team break down, no; ver' cold, yes, but she ver' warm, yes, and ver' brave, yes; miss train, no."

In the morning, before Field was fairly astir, the kindly Japanese appeared with a breakfast on a tray, and carefully surveyed the boat to see that everything needed was provided for the trip.

Asking for his bill, which Field thought would be a goodly sum, Taki shook his head, saying:

"He pay it, yes—all arrange, yes"—meaning that the old man had compensated him—and he would accept nothing.

In parting, Field promised to write to him, and Taki was pleased and stood on the bank watching the Lyle Blake until it was out of sight.

Wayne Roberts' commission as given to Field, in that characteristically practical letter revealing Wes Litchfield's identity, was carried out to the letter in the weeks following, including the securing of the dog, "Lockie," which "Sandy" Colburn surrendered with some reluctance; and the Lyle Blake, in due season, by keeping close to shore, reached Seattle under its own power.

Meanwhile, a romance begun in Alaska and attended with mystery and sorrow, was slowly but naturally reaching a beautiful climax in the East.

CHAPTER XX.

EVER AFTER—FINIS

LYLE BLAKE and Wayne Roberts were in the garden of his mother's Summer home. Plants and flowers abounded, all abloom, and the environment was idyllic. Betrothed, she had come on a visit. It was nearing the end. They were talking of the past and brighter days to come. She was pensive, a bit more womanly than a year ago; petite and pretty and of captivating grace and manner. His adoration had grown and was shown in every word and act. Business forgotten, subordinated to love of her, he was full of solicitude and tender sentiment. His thoughts concentrated in her.

"Do you know, dear little girl, when you won my heart?"

She looked up questioningly and pressed his arm and waited for him to say.

"You do remember that day?"

"Dear big boy! Could I ever forget?" And she nestled closer to him.

"Yes, sweetheart, that day we shared our sorrows and told of our home ties and longings. Did you feel then that we were destined to be one?"

"Not quite," she said. "Admiration kindled my affection, but I was not sure. And you—you gave me your heart then?"

"Then and forever more, beloved girl."

"And you thought of me away off up there?"

"Every hour."

"If I had only known!"

"I wrote and tried to tell you, dear."

"I know, I know now—bless your heart!—but did not know then."

"You remember we spoke of our love of our devoted mothers living and how we missed our fathers dead—my own really so?"

"True; our hearts were one in sympathy and understanding then. And soon—so very soon—I was to be in my father's keeping."

"You were going to him."

"Heaven sent me, now I believe and know."

"Blessed thought! I share it with you, and your faith."

She breathed a prayer and clung closer.

He led her to a rustic bench, and there, in reminiscent mood, they sat.

"Dear one," presently he said, "of all of Nature's wonders, Lynn Canal to me will ever hold surpassing charm because of your companionship that day of days, that trip of trips. It transformed my life."

"My own, too," she answered sadly, "but, oh, the strange course of transformation! I live over it as in a dream—a sweet and sad and frightful dream. Often it is unreal. Comfort comes in the pleasant recollections. These are sacred; before me vividly; I treasure and linger upon them. The happy hours on the lonely river are priceless, and I am devoutly grateful to our good God for guiding me there. But I cannot banish tragic times and scenes. The bright and somber, the lights and shadows, combine and intermingle. Everything is minutely revisualized and reappears. I hear the barking malamutes and shrieking winds, and am overcome by the dark solitude. I see poor father's cold grave on the snow-covered hill. Kind Taki is ever vigilantly near, and, in the warm parka he provided, I travel with him and the dogs on the ice for endless nights, praying

to see and understand, and crying my heart out; and, finally, by rail and rattling truck, I reach the gulf, there to be terrorized by the rocking and plunging of the steamship in mad depths. This memory haunts and harrows me.

"To have found him and been with him, and given him peace, and to have sung to him and held his hand when he smiled and closed his eyes in death requites many-fold the awful cost of it all for his dear sake. But, oh, that he might have lived and come home with me!"

"My dear, brave little girl, I understand." And he took her, sobbing, into his arms and soothed her. Not before in his presence had she thus given vent to her feelings.

They were to be married two months hence and he was with her constantly during her visit, the first and only one she had made since her return from Alaska. It was upon the urgent and repeated invitation of Wayne's mother, a gentle soul, of the same age as her own, but older in appearance, with whom she had corresponded, that she had come and been taken to heart and bosom as a daughter. Hitherto Mrs. Roberts had uniformly discouraged marital suggestions affecting Wayne, but, with implicit motherly confidence, month and months ago, when he wrote of Lyle, she had approved and later advised a hastening of the nuptials. It was from her that he inherited the practical side of his nature. She felt it was time for him to marry. Now knowing the girl and discovering in her all the rare qualities he had described, she was increasingly proud of his choice. Unaffected by the tragic episode in Lyle's life, of which he apprised her fully, she loved her all the more.

Her fortnight's visit tended to restore her cheery

spirit and, except for temporary lapses, she was again her happy self. When she gave sign of heart-ache son and mother tactfully diverted her.

For months she had not touched the piano, but now she played and sang to their delight. Mrs. Roberts, accomplished in music and a patron of the opera, was much impressed with her talents and praised her highly.

Wayne, inadvertently, one evening asked her to sing "The Long, Long Trail." She demurred momentarily, but, wishing to please him, began tremulously, and, controlling herself, sang with appealing pathos. Lost in the melody, she was once more on the melancholy Yukon with the lonely, longing old man, giving peace to his weary soul. The tragedy was unfolded in the singing. Tears filled their eyes as they listened. Never had they heard a voice so touching and sorrowful. With the final plaintive refrain her hands fell helplessly and her head sank on the keyboard. She was unnerved and undone.

"Dear, dear child, why did I ask it?" said Wayne in acute sympathy and regret, and his mother, moved beyond expression, hugged and comforted her.

Rallying bravely, she begged them to forgive her emotion, and, in a few minutes, still far away in the Northland, she was rendering a lively war air to which Wayne marched in France.

They took automobile rides along the interesting sound; had a picnic in a grove on a river, which reminded her of the Wabash, and spent a day in the city, where they dined at a big hotel she had read about, and ascended to the tower of a tall buiiding to behold the marvelous Manhattan make-up. People below were specs, dotting the crowded thoroughfares —people, people, people, everywhere. On any corner, she could count more of humanity than she had

seen in all Alaska, and he pointed out a building that housed daily a larger population than the entire Territory enumerated. In corridors she passed countrymen of Taki's—sleek little men, very polite and confident, but none, she felt, as good and kind as he. The emporiums were no more pretentious than those in the West, but the smaller stores on the side streets were irresistible, and at these and the big ones, with his mother, she shopped while he kept a business appointment.

The city interested her, but increased her desire for the country. She could never be content in such a hurrying, scurrying mass. Yes, she could! Here or anywhere she could be happy with Wayne, but life was too sweet and had better things in store for them. Already he was having a suburban bungalow built in Denver—a home designed by her as she had conceived it when beautifying her father's river home and wondering whether Wayne Roberts had forgotten her and hoping he had not. It would be cozy like the Lyle Blake, its space conserved, all on one floor, but roomier, of course, with a wing set apart for her mother. They had talked it over, hour upon hour. Architecture was Lyle's hobby, and every detail was to be just as she wished, including the decorations and furnishings. The planning and the purchasing gave her pleasure supreme.

On the last day of her visit, returning from a ride, a telegraphic message was delivered to him and the reading of it excited and delighted her. Filed at St. Michael and relayed from Denver, it came from Mark Field and said that the Lyle Blake had "behaved admirably" and he would proceed thereon to Seattle, and was bringing the dog.

Her boat! Soon it would be in Puget Sound, and in the Autumn they would cruise on it to Victoria

and Vancouver. Impulsively she kissed her big boy and gleefully danced about. Next to Wayne and their home the boat was her best-beloved belonging.

The old man, her father, before he revealed himself to her, had effected a settlement with Taki by transfer of a consignment of furs in storage down the river and taken up the lien and formally placed the cozy craft in her name. Realizing that his days were few, he put his affairs in complete order by bequeathing to wife and daughter all that he possessed, the intelligent Taki witnessing his signature to necessary papers. She was uninformed until the box sent in her charge was opened and examined. The property thus left to them was not of large value, but sufficient, with a check covering an old deposit in the Iditarod bank, to provide for their modest immediate needs and relieve the girl for a period from the necessity of teaching. Upon Wayne Roberts, who, after all, did not wait long to see Lyle and her mother, after his return, had devolved the subsequent duty of adjusting everything—a simple duty capably performed in his characteristically practical way, but not devoid of sentimental thoughtfulness, including an annual allowance to Taki for the care of the grave.

"And 'Lockie' will go with us, sweetheart," he told her, adding to her ecstasy, while he, loving dogs, in vision saw the fine hound he endeavored to buy at Apokak.

"Father's dog! His steadfast friend of the wilds! How good we shall be to him!" Her eyes were misty as she recalled the old man's worry over "Lockie" when she wrote the letter for him.

Wayne and his mother had her wholly to themselves these blissful, fleeting days, and she became again the animated Lyle Blake who, a year before,

journeyed so merrily and cheerily toward the top of the world. A new life was opening to her.

When the leave-takings were over and she was aboard the train, waving her handkerchief to disconsolate Wayne until he was lost to view, his parting kiss fresh on her lips, she sought the desk of the observation car and busied herself for hours on the over-night trip, writing a long, long letter to the Governor's daughter in Juneau, telling of the great happiness that had come to her and picturing Wayne as "the most wonderful, dear big boy" that ever lived. She filled page after page with raptures. Every line showed her returned joy in living. In two sentences only did she refer to her strange adventure.

"To think," she wrote, "that I should be guided and directed to Alaska to discover and give comfort to my lonely, dying father, who needed me so, and, on the fateful journey, find the good husband intended for me. Surely God moves in a merciful and mysterious way His wonders to perform!"

She gave the date set for the wedding, which would be at her present home, and they would leave at once for their own home in readiness in Denver. Only their mothers and an aged aunt of hers would attend the ceremony, unless, perchance, the Governor and wife and daughter might find it possible to be there as "members of the immediate family," which would "crown our happiness perfectly." If they could not come—and it was really too much to expect—she hoped to see them in Seattle in September when the daughter would be in the University, and Wayne would be taking her to British Columbia on a second honeymoon trip.

The receipt and reading of the letter thrilled and filled the official household with joy. Lyle's happiness was radiated across the continent to far-off

Juneau. The daughter said it was "divine," and the Governor and wife shared her thought.

Juneau, at this time, was in the midst of the tourist season, a very lively little capital, and they could not go to the wedding. Visitors were coming by steamer loads, a few of nation-wide prominence—the war hero Governor General of the Dominion among them—and to one and all the Mansion's latch-string was out in greeting. Palatial yachts bearing important personages put into the harbor and made the Summer the more memorable. Alaska was in the public eye. The President was coming next year and his interest was communicative and popularizing. Fewer travelers were going abroad and more seeing America and journeying Northward.

Although not "among those present," the Governor and family forwarded gifts and cabled greetings, evincing their heart interest in the happy culmination of the sweet romance that had its tender inception in a beautiful voyage through scenic waters along picturesque shores. The Governor's gift, distinctively Alaskan, was a dish or bowl in the form of a frog, carved from wood by an old Sitka Indian, a Thlingit, who saw the Russian flag hauled down in 1867, and with it went a legend.

The frog emblem of the Thlingit people was a special possession of the Kiksadi tribe, who claimed it from the fact that persons of their clan had had special dealings with frogs. The Ganaxadi tell the same story as the Wrangell Kiksadi about the marriage of a woman of their clan to a frog, and claim the frog also.

Following is the story, "How the Sitka Kiksadi obtained the frog emblem."

*A man and his wife were crossing the mouth of a big bay named Lheyaq, when it became so foggy that they could not even see the water around their canoe and stopped where they were. Then, quite a distance away in the thick fog, they heard singing, and it continued for so long a time that they learned the song by heart. The words of the song are:

First verse:

"We picked a man;
You picked a man."

Second verse:

"They captured a man;
They captured a man;
You captured a man."

The voice was so powerful that they could hear it re-echo among the mountains. When the fog began to rise so that they could look under it a little they heard the song coming nearer and nearer. They looked about and finally saw that it came from a very little frog. To make sure of it they paddled along for some time in the direction it was taking. Then the man said:

"This frog is mine. I am going to claim it."

And his wife answered:

"No, it is going to be mine. I am going to claim it."

After they had disputed for some time, the man finally let it go to his wife.

Then the woman took it ashore, treating it like a child, carried it up to the woods, put it down by a lake and left it there. From that time on, her people have been Kiksadi. That is how the Sitka Kiksadi came to claim the frog emblem.

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*From *"Thlingit Myths and Texts,"* by Dr. John R. Swanton, Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology. (Bulletin No. 39 — 1909.)

"You will observe," wrote the Governor to Wayne, "that in the little contention husband yielded to wife, and I commend the example to your emulation."

And the young man, in telegraphic acknowledgment, promised to heed the admonition.

* * * * *

On Lake Washington, one evening in September, aboard the Lyle Blake, in gala attire, its cozy deck shaded by attractive awnings, the daughter and two Kappa Kappa Gamma sisters dined with Mr. and Mrs. Wayne Roberts. They sang sorority songs in which Lyle joined heartily, and Wayne, a college boy anew, gave Delta Tau Delta calls and choruses. She herself had prepared the dainty feast. Love and laughter reigned.

Mark Field appeared and a song was improvised and sung to him. He told of Eskimos of the Kuskokwim and gave eloquent account of his voyage from St. Michael by outside passage on this slightly, sea-going craft. Soon he would return to the Yukon to reorganize the mining property near Ruby, which the resourceful Wayne had refinanced and made worth while.

"Lockie" was brought from the engine-room and cavorted about, mistress fondling him affectionately and master putting him through Siberian tricks of the blood. He was their steady company. Never should they desert this loyal friend of the wilds.

Within the cabin, when the dinner was over and they were leaving the boat, for just a moment Lyle became dreamily abstracted. The college chimes were sounding and her thoughts far away as she looked at the guitar still hanging on the wall and the books and magazines reposing on the shelf as he had left them. His Bible only was missing. It was treasured by her mother and substituted by another for nightly reading on their cruises.

Crossing the campus, alive with students, the

daughter saw two of her acquaintances, Jack and Jean Carmody, sophomores, and called and introduced them as from Alaska.

"Coast or interior?" asked Wayne, after the exchange of formalities.

"Eagle," Jean responded, and Jack nodded, proudly.

"At the boundary on the Yukon," said Wayne, informed geographically. "Your home is there?"

"Born there and Sourdoughs to our finger tips," Jean answered, and Jack assented, promptly.

"And a credit to their native Northland," interjected the daughter, admiringly.

Jack had made the rowing team and pulled an oar in the winning race at Poughkeepsie, and Jean was the star in dramatics and a leader in college debates.

Lyle listened intently and Wayne was absorbed deeply.

"I traveled on the Upper Yukon in July last year," said she, "but passed Eagle in the night."

"Eagle has no night in July," corrected Jean, politely.

"I was asleep, I should have said," Lyle explained. "But I was very wide-awake when we passed Calico Bluff beyond and watched the midnight sun night after night and took pictures of it."

They chatted of these and kindred wonders of the far North.

Memory suddenly returning, Lyle recalled that she was to have occupied a state-room with a miner's wife, Jane Carmody, had she sailed on the Selkirk. Wayne had previously identified them in connection with Field's report of his fruitless quest at Eagle. But the incident was not reopened.

"You will come again," said Jean, confidently, "and must stop and see us."

And Jack to Wayne repeated the invitation, cordially.

"Perhaps," said Lyle, feeling the lure of the Northland.

"I think we shall," said Wayne. "You will return to Eagle?"

"Once an Alaskan, always an Alaskan," said Jack, loyally.

"Forever and forever," echoed Jean, decidedly.

As Lyle and Wayne strolled on the Mountain stood out in all its glory and seemed to approach Elliot Bay to offer sublime benediction upon the scene and them. There was not a cloud in the sky. Their hearts were young and they were very, very happy. Heaven keep them! And God bless Alaska!

THE END.

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